



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



FRIDAY — 17 JUN 2022

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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	06/17 WTO 'unprecedented' trade package
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/06/17/switzerland-World-Trade-Organization-agreement/1991655448167/
GIST	<p>June 17 (UPI) -- The 164-member World Trade Organization agreed Friday to an "unprecedented" package of trade deals after failed negotiations had extended its first high-level meeting in years as it sought to thwart questions swirling around its effectiveness.</p> <p>The package contains agreements on fisheries subsidies, food safety, WTO reforms and emergency response, including a partial waiver for COVID-19 vaccines, and was finalized early Friday at the end</p>

of a nearly weeklong ministerial meeting that was seen by many as a test of the organization's ability to deliver results.

The 12th WTO Ministerial Conference in Geneva, Switzerland, was the first high-level meeting of the organization since a 2017 gathering ended without agreements on several issues.

Those worries persisted this week when WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala called on members to work on finding consensus on various roadblocks before extending the meeting until early Friday to allow more time for negotiations.

At the start of the conference on Sunday, [she warned the ministers](#) that there was much at stake during the meeting, not only for the WTO but for the world as it faces challenges ranging from the COVID-19 pandemic to the war in Ukraine.

She said that members needed to have "political will to show that the WTO can be part of the solution to the multiple crises of the global commons we face."

On Friday, she congratulated the ministers for their work, stating they "stepped up and delivered in every area we have been working on."

"The package of agreements you have reached will make a difference to the lives of people around the world," she said in [her closing remarks](#) while calling the package "unprecedented."

She added the agreements show that the WTO is capable of responding to emergencies and that they give hope that strategic cooperation can exist alongside growing competition.

"They show the world that WTO members can come together, across geopolitical fault lines, to address problems of the global commons, and to reinforce and reinvigorate this institution," she said.

The WTO works on consensus, meaning any one country can veto a resolution.

Among the measures agreed to Friday is a partial waiver for COVID-19 vaccine intellectual property rights, which advocates and world leaders, including U.S. President [Joe Biden](#), had been calling for in order to make it easier to manufacture and distribute the life-saving shots amid the pandemic, especially to poor countries.

Katherine Tai, the United States trade representative, said the deal will facilitate a global health recovery.

"Through difficult and protracted discussions, members were able to bridge differences and achieve a concrete and meaningful outcome to get more safe and effective vaccines to those who need it most," she said in [a statement](#). "This agreement shows that we can work together to make the WTO more relevant to the needs of regular people."

However, the agreement came under swift and strong criticism from charity and health organizations that say it doesn't go nearly far enough to alleviate barriers poor countries face in accessing vaccines. "The conduct of rich countries at the WTO has been utterly shameful," Max Lawson, co-chair of the People's Vaccine Alliance said in [a statement](#).

"This so-called compromise largely reiterates developing countries' existing rights to override patents in certain circumstances. And it tries to restrict even that limited right to countries which do not already have capacity to produce COVID-19 vaccines."

"Put it simply, it is a technocratic fudge aimed at saving reputations, not lives," Lawson said.

Doctors Without Borders also said it was disappointed with the deal, which comes 20 months after India and South Africa first proposed waiving intellectual property rights concerning COVID-19 medical tools.

"This agreement fails overall to offer an effective and meaningful solution to help increase people's access to needed medical tools during the pandemic ... and it does not apply to all countries," Christos Christou, president of the humanitarian aid group, said in [a statement](#). "The measures outlined in the decision will not address pharmaceutical monopolies or ensure affordable access to lifesaving medical tools and will set a negative precedent for future global health crises and pandemics."

Among the agreements made Friday, Tai also commended the WTO for maintaining its current stance of zero customs duties on electronic transmissions, stating digital commerce has provided an economic lifeline to many during the pandemic.

The outcome, she said in [a separate statement](#), "will reduce trade costs and provide opportunities for small- and medium-sized businesses while supporting supply chain resilience in a wide range of sectors ... that rely on the constant flow of information for their production processes and operations."

The members also agreed to a fisheries subsidies treaty that Okonjo-Iweala described as the WTO's first trade deal to be centered on environmental sustainability.

The agreement aims to protect dwindling global fish stocks by cutting subsidies. It also prohibits support for illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and commits the member states to further negotiations on the topic.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan, Britain's international trade secretary, remarked that the fisheries agreement does not go as far as London would want but "it does go some way to delivering what our oceans need and all those that are dependent on them.

"The agreements we reached this week may not be perfect, but they do provide a platform on which we can continue to build," she said in [a statement](#).

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HEADLINE	06/17 EU backs Ukraine membership bid
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/europe-steps-up-support-ukraine-russia-presses-offensive-2022-06-17/
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS/KYIV, Ukraine, June 17 (Reuters) - The European Union gave its blessing on Friday for Ukraine and its neighbour Moldova to become candidates to join, in the most dramatic geopolitical shift to result from Russia's invasion.</p> <p>Ukraine applied to join the EU just four days after Russian troops poured across its border in February. Four days later, so did Moldova and Georgia - smaller ex-Soviet states also contending with separatist regions occupied by Russian troops.</p> <p>"Ukraine has clearly demonstrated the country's aspiration and the country's determination to live up to European values and standards," the EU's executive Commission head Ursula von der Leyen said in Brussels. She made the announcement wearing Ukrainian colours, a yellow blazer over a blue shirt.</p> <p>President Volodymyr Zelenskyy thanked von der Leyen and EU member states on Twitter for a decision he called "the first step on the EU membership path that'll certainly bring our victory closer".</p> <p>Moldova's President Maia Sandu hailed a "strong signal of support for Moldova & our citizens!" and said she counted on the support of EU member states.</p> <p>"We're committed to working hard," she said on Twitter.</p>

While recommending candidate status for Ukraine and Moldova, the Commission held off for Georgia, which it said must meet more conditions first.

Von der Leyen said Georgia has a strong application but had to come together politically. A senior diplomat close to the process cited setbacks in reforms there.

Leaders of EU countries are expected to endorse the decision at a summit next week. The leaders of the three biggest - Germany, France and Italy - had signalled their solidarity on Thursday by visiting Kyiv, along with the president of Romania.

"Ukraine belongs to the European family," Germany's Olaf Scholz said after meeting President Volodymyr Zelenskiy.

Ukraine and Moldova will still face a lengthy process to achieve the standards required for membership, and there are other candidates in the waiting room. Nor is membership guaranteed - talks have been stalled for years with Turkey, officially a candidate since 1999.

But launching the candidacy process, a move that would have seemed unthinkable just months ago, amounts to a shift on par with the decision in the 1990s to welcome the ex-Communist countries of Eastern Europe.

"Precisely because of the bravery of the Ukrainians, Europe can create a new history of freedom, and finally remove the grey zone in Eastern Europe between the EU and Russia," Zelenskiy said in his nightly video address.

If admitted, Ukraine would be the EU's largest country by area and its fifth most populous. All three hopefuls are far poorer than any existing EU members, with per capita output around half that of the poorest, Bulgaria.

All have recent histories of volatile politics, domestic unrest, entrenched organised crime, and unresolved conflicts with Russian-backed separatists proclaiming sovereignty over territory protected by Moscow's troops.

PORT BLOCKADE

President Vladimir Putin ordered his "special military operation" officially to disarm and "denazify" Ukraine. One of his main objectives was to halt the expansion of Western institutions which he called a threat to Russia.

But the war, which has killed thousands of people, destroyed whole cities and set millions to flight, has had the opposite effect. Finland and Sweden have applied to join the NATO military alliance, and the EU has opened its arms to the east.

Within Ukraine, Russian forces were defeated in an attempt to storm the capital in March, but have since refocused on seizing more territory in the east.

The nearly four-month-old war has entered a punishing attritional phase, with Russian forces relying on their massive advantage in artillery firepower to blast their way into Ukrainian cities.

Ukrainian officials said their troops were still holding out in Sievierodonetsk, site of the worst fighting of recent weeks, on the east bank of the Siverskyi Donetsk river. It was impossible to evacuate more than 500 civilians who are trapped inside a chemical plant, the regional governor said.

In the surrounding Donbas region, which Moscow claims on behalf of its separatist proxies, Ukrainian forces are mainly defending the river's opposite bank.

	<p>Near the frontline in the ruins of the small city of Marinka, Ukrainian police made their way into a cellar searching for anyone who wanted help to evacuate. A group of mainly elderly residents huddled on mattresses in candlelight.</p> <p>"There's space down here, you could join us," joked one man as the officers came in. A woman named Nina sighed in the darkness: "There is nowhere. Nowhere. Nowhere to go. All the houses have been burnt out. Where can we go?"</p> <p>In the south, Ukraine has mounted a counter-offensive, claiming to have made inroads into the biggest swath still held by Russia of the territory it seized in the invasion. There have been few reports from the frontline to confirm the situation in that area.</p> <p>Ukraine claimed its forces had struck a Russian tugboat bringing soldiers, weapons and ammunition to Russian-occupied Snake Island, a strategic Black Sea outpost.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Ukraine slowly regaining ground in south
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/ukraine-russia-south-kherson/2022/06/16/id/1074792/
GIST	<p>Ukraine is slowly reclaiming small portions of territory in a tedious counteroffensive in the southern region of Kherson while the majority of Russian forces are tied down in the eastern part of the country.</p> <p>After retaking the village of Mykolaivka, which improved Ukraine's strategic position, its armed forces have claimed a number of small victories, including in the village of Tavriiske.</p> <p>Serhii Hlan, head of the Regional Military Administration of Kherson, wrote that the army is launching counterattacks on the villages of Kyselivka, Soldatske and Oleksandrivka.</p> <p>Kyselivka is approximately 20 miles from the regional capital of Kherson.</p> <p>Kherson, which has been occupied by Russian forces for most of the war, has seen protests and resistance operations that have intensified recently. One flyer, distributed across the city, read: "Russians, too late to run. Rostov - 559 Kilometers, Armed Forces of Ukraine - 10." Rostov is the nearest city in Russia proper, nearly 350 miles away.</p> <p>Despite the territorial gains, some military analysts are expressing caution.</p> <p>Mykhailo Zhirokhov, a Ukrainian military historian, says that the state of affairs along the entire front line is by and large "unstable," except for the eastern regions, and claims of a Ukrainian counteroffensive are premature.</p> <p>"What's happening can't be called a counteroffensive. Both Russians and Ukrainians are constantly losing and reclaiming small settlements in the so-called gray zone of the front," Zhirokhov told Newsmax.</p> <p>In the northeastern Kharkov region, some villages have traded hands four times.</p> <p>Moreover, Russia is consolidating its positions and adding reservists to hold its southern gains. According to a video report by Vladislav Nazarov, head of the Operational Command South, Russia is protecting the Northern Crimean Canal in Kherson that allows them to pump water into Crimea. Ukraine cut the water supply after Russia annexed the peninsula in 2014.</p> <p>"Russians have engineered reinforced concrete protection for the canal. All bridges and points of entry have been fortified as well," Nazarov told Newsmax.</p> <p>Military experts have said that Ukraine is in need of "offensive" weapons from its Western allies to conduct any counteroffensive.</p>

	<p>Former Foreign Affairs Minister Pavlo Klimkin told the Novini Pryazovia newspaper that those weapons have been slow to come.</p> <p>"The majority of our western partners are scared of further escalating the war with Russia. In particular, they're afraid of nuclear and chemical strikes," Klimkin said.</p> <p>Ukrainian military analyst Oleh Zhdanov suggested that the Russians' morale will be a key factor in the outcome.</p> <p>"If Russians are prepared to die for Kherson, it'll be very tough for us to make any gains right now," Zdanov said. "If they're not, they'll retreat and run, no matter what their leadership will tell them to do. I doubt they're ready to die for Kherson."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Retailers, marketers cash in on Juneteenth
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/juneteenth-holidays-social-media-18bf4e05ed1bee32e238e7d3993ba6cd
GIST	<p>NEW YORK (AP) — Retailers and marketers have been quick to commemorate Juneteenth with an avalanche of merchandise from ice cream to T-shirts to party cups.</p> <p>But many are getting backlash on social media for what critics say undermines the day, designated as a federal holiday last year to honor the emancipation of enslaved African Americans. A search for Juneteenth items among online sellers like Amazon and J.C. Penney produced everything from toothpicks with pan-African flags to party plates and balloons.</p> <p>Walmart, the nation's largest retailer, apologized last month after getting slammed for a Juneteenth ice cream flavor — swirled red velvet and cheesecake — under its store label Great Value. Walmart said it's reviewing its product assortment and will remove items "as appropriate." As of Thursday, Walmart's site was still offering lots of T-shirts and party plates.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the Indianapolis Children's Museum removed a Juneteenth watermelon salad from its menu and issued a mea culpa earlier this week. In a statement posted on its Facebook page, the museum blamed a lapse in vendor oversight, noting the label and salad were not reviewed by museum staff.</p> <p>"We are an imperfect institution, but we are committed to improvement and will work tirelessly to regain your trust," the museum wrote on its Facebook page.</p> <p>The backlash comes as companies promised after the police killing of George Floyd in May of 2020 to no longer stay silent and vowed to take an active role in confronting and educating customers and employees on systemic racism. According to the preliminary results of a survey by Mercer of 200 employers, 33% are offering Juneteenth as a paid holiday to their staff. That's up from 9% last year in a survey of more than 400 companies conducted shortly before Juneteenth was declared a federal holiday.</p> <p>At the same time, many have cashed in on a holiday that Black Americans have observed since June 19, 1865, when Union Major General Gordon Granger proclaimed freedom for enslaved people in Galveston, Texas, in alignment with President Abraham Lincoln's 1863 Emancipation Proclamation.</p> <p>Many experts believe that if retailers and other marketers plan to recognize the day, they should either sell merchandise from Black-owned businesses or invest in campaigns that would help Black communities. Amazon, for instance, does have a Black-owned business storefront that's live all year-round for customers who want to support and shop Black-owned businesses selling on the site.</p> <p>"This is a serious and reflective moment — I am excited and grateful for the recognition," said Ramon Manning, chairman of the board at Emancipation Park Conservancy, a nonprofit organization aimed to</p>

restore the park, which was purchased in 1872 by a group of former enslaved people to commemorate the anniversary of their emancipation.

“However, I feel like it is also brought back everybody else out of the woodwork who are opportunists more so than folks who are looking at the history of this country and looking at where a group of people have come from,” he added.

Manning, who is also founder and chairman of Ridgeway Capital, a private investment fund, further wondered: “Who is this going to benefit?”

Sheryl Daija, founder and CEO of Bridge, a group of marketing and diversity, equity and inclusion executives, noted there’s a disconnect between the seriousness of the holiday and the merchandise on display.

“A lot of companies have good intentions, but unfortunately good intentions can go awry, and this is what we have seen,” said Daija, who found Walmart’s Juneteenth ice cream particularly egregious because it used the holiday moniker to brand a new ice cream flavor.

Companies have a long history of commercializing holidays and other moments in order to cash in. Take [Cinco de Mayo](#), which has become in the U.S a celebration of all things Mexican, with companies selling everything from beans to beer to sombrero hats. The holiday has spread from the American Southwest, even though most have no idea about its original ties to the U.S. Civil War, abolition and promotion of civil rights for Blacks. In fact, it’s often mistaken for Mexican Independence day.

Meanwhile, every October, retailers are awash in pink merchandise to celebrate Breast Cancer Awareness month, but critics say many make misleading claims about supporting cancer groups. And Memorial Day, a federal holiday day designated to mourn the U.S. military who have died while serving in the U.S. armed forces, has morphed into all-day mattress sales at stores.

But what makes the move by companies to cash in on Juneteenth worse is that it comes as the U.S. remains fraught with racial tensions, said Darnise Martin, clinical associate professor of African American studies at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles.

“It is weird to merchandise around it, but that’s what America does,” Martin said.

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HEADLINE	06/16 US pays upkeep seized Russia superyachts
SOURCE	https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/politics/the-craziest-thing-about-seizing-russian-superyachts-is-the-us-has-to-pay-for-them-biden-s-national-security-advisor-says-on-hot-mic/ar-AAYxlSi
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Following Russia's attack on Ukraine, the US has cracked down on Russian oligarchs and their assets.• That crackdown has led to numerous seizures of luxurious superyachts from ports around the world.• The US is on the hook for upkeep of those vessels, Biden's national security adviser said Thursday. <p>The worldwide crackdown on Russian assets has deprived many of that country's oligarchs of their superyachts, but those seizures also have a cost for the US, which has to pay for the upkeep of the vessels it seizes.</p> <p>Speaking moments before the beginning of an event at the Center for a New American Security on Thursday, Jake Sullivan, who is national security adviser to President Joe Biden, mentioned the ongoing Operation KleptoCapture, a Justice Department-led effort targeting Russian "elites, proxies, and oligarchs" with sanctions and civil and criminal asset seizures.</p>

Sullivan appeared to reference the recent seizure of the Amadea, a 348-foot yacht owned by sanctioned Russian oligarch Suleiman Kerimov. The US moved to seize the yacht in early May and it sailed for the US in early June, after Fiji's supreme court [authorized](#) its seizure.

"I just wasn't aware how many super yachts there were in the world," Richard Fontaine, chief executive officer of the CNAS, tells Sullivan on the recording. "I mean the size of these things, the value of these things is unbelievable."

"I know. It's so ridiculous, but you know what the craziest thing is? When we seize one, we have to pay for upkeep," Sullivan says in reply. "The federal government pays for upkeep because under the kind of forfeiture rubric, so like some people are basically being paid to maintain Russian superyachts on behalf of the United States government."

Fontaine interviewed Sullivan during the event Thursday morning. The audio of their exchange was broadcast on a livestream, which was taken offline shortly after [Sullivan's comments were publicized](#). A spokesperson for the think tank called the takedown a "[honest mistake](#)" and it was later reposted.

Sullivan's mention of a "forfeiture rubric" was likely a reference to the US's government's responsibility for maintaining property it seizes in good condition.

The US Marshals Service, which takes control of seized property, has a network of private contractors that often do the day-to-day maintenance. Seized assets are often stored to make that work easier, with cars placed in specialized lots or boats put in dry docks.

"If there's something that has to be done, like make sure the property doesn't flood or make sure the water's turned off in the winter or something — that's the Marshals' responsibility," Sarah Krissoff, a former federal prosecutor, told [Insider's Jacob Shamsian this spring](#).

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HEADLINE	06/16 Portland looks like 'open air drug market'
SOURCE	https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10923923/Portland-resembles-open-air-drug-market-legalizing-hard-drugs.html
GIST	<p>The streets of Portland resemble an 'open air drug market' after state officials' scheme to decriminalize hard drugs led to a surge in overdose deaths, critics claim.</p> <p>Law enforcement agents say that the streets of Portland are full of homeless addicts openly buying and selling drugs and that signs of drug addiction are actually increasing statewide, Fox News reported.</p> <p>Photos show the desperate situation in the liberal Pacific Northwest city, where people can be seen shooting up drugs or passed out in broad daylight.</p> <p>The dreadful scene comes 16 months after Ballot Measure 110-which passed with 58.8 percent support-decriminalized hard drugs in the Democrat-run state.</p> <p>Oregon was the first state in the United States to decriminalize possession of personal-use amounts of heroin, methamphetamine, LSD, oxycodone and other drugs after voters approved a ballot measure in 2020 to decriminalize hard drugs.</p> <p>A person found with personal amounts of heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine and other drugs receives a citation, like a traffic ticket, with the maximum \$100 fine waived if they call a hotline for a health assessment.</p> <p>The state's program, which has been promoted as a way to establish and fund addiction recovery centers that would offer people aid instead of incarceration, is being watched as a potential model for other states.</p>

Drug overdose deaths in the state also hit an all-time high in 2021 with 1069, a 41 percent increase from 2020, Fox News reported.

And of the 1,885 people who received tickets for personal possession in the first year, only 91 people, a measly one percent, called the hotline, according to its non-profit operator, Lines For Life.

Earlier this month, those behind the scheme admitted that they had underestimated the effort required to distributed the \$300 million in funds for the program, and only \$40 million has been spent.

'So clearly, if we were to do it over again, I would have asked for many more staff much quicker in the process,' said Steve Allen, Oregon's behavioral health director.

'We were just under-resourced to be able to support this effort, underestimated the work that was involved in supporting something that looked like this and partly we didn't fully understand it until we were in the middle of it.'

The ballot measure redirected millions of dollars in tax revenue from the state's legal marijuana industry to treatment.

But applications for funding stacked up after state officials underestimated the work required to vet them and get the money out the door, officials testified earlier this month before the House Interim Committee on Behavioral Health.

The health authority said \$40 million in funds have been disbursed.

But about \$265 million set aside for the 2021-23 biennium still hasn't been spent, said Devon Downeysmith, spokeswoman for the Health Justice Recovery Alliance.

Hundreds of providers, which screen the needs of people who use drugs, offer case management, treatment, housing and links to other services, are waiting for those funds.

More than 16,000 Oregonians have accessed services through Measure 110 funding, according to the Drug Policy Alliance, which spearheaded the measure.

Portland is just one of several Democratic-led cities blighted by rampant open-air drug abuse.

Recent images and videos of the streets of San Francisco show loiterers using drugs in full view, car break-ins, aggressive shoplifting, homeless encampments and fouling of pavements with human excrement.

Things began going downhill in the liberal city under ousted Democratic District Attorney Chesa Boudin.

Boudin was elected in 2019 on a platform of criminal justice reform, but his notoriously progressive laws have been widely blamed for rising crime and homelessness in the Bay Area since the start of the pandemic - where brazen looters ransacking stores and breaking into cars has become commonplace.

So far this year, statistics show that the crime wave has worsened from last year - one of the worst crime years in decades - with the city's murder rate rising 11 percent, and rapes up by nearly 10 percent.

Boudin's time in office has also seen a marked rise in vagrancy - a stand-out issue in the Bay Area, where homelessness and brazen open drug use has increased in earnest during the pandemic.

But as infection rates plunge and restrictions continue to lessen, the city's crime and seedy underbelly has persisted - frustrating citizens to no end.

San Francisco police report 20 murders so far this year, an 11 percent increase from the 18 reported in the same time last year.

Larceny theft, meanwhile - which represents the majority of the recent 'smash and grabs' - has skyrocketed under Boudin, with 13,424 cases reported this year, a 20.4 percent rise from the 11,151 reported last year.

Assaults have also been on the rise, with 11 percent with 1,035 cases reported so far this year, with rapes also up by a concerning 10 percent.

As larceny continues to see the largest increase in crime, the Bay Area has contended with a series of smash-and-grab robberies in the past year, with brazen thieves raiding stores in the middle of day.

Illicit fentanyl started appearing on San Francisco streets in 2018, and is often mixed with other drugs such as heroin and cocaine to increase potency.

Overdose deaths rose rapidly with the arrival of fentanyl and deaths connected to the drug increased from nine in 2009 to 230 in 2019, the city said in a report. In 2021, the city reported 474 deaths due to fentanyl.

The city has taken several steps to address the fentanyl epidemic, including adding new drug and mental health beds and launching the Street Overdose Response team to provide care for people at high risk of overdose, SFGATE reported.

San Francisco Mayor London Breed declared a state of emergency in the city, which streamlined the city's permitting regulations in order to quickly open the linkage center. The facility connects people living on the street and struggling with substance use and mental health issues, to services.

The state of emergency expired in April, but the mayor renewed aspects of the declaration to allow city workers to serve as disaster service workers to respond to issues in the Tenderloin neighborhood, which is particularly hard hit.

'The mayor agrees that we need to break up open-air drug dealing in San Francisco,' the mayor's office wrote in an emailed statement.

'Police officers are making arrests every day, and in the last few weeks an additional 20 officers have been added to the Tenderloin neighborhood to support our emergency response initiative. The police have seized over 10 kilos of fentanyl in the Tenderloin area this year alone, which is roughly four times more than was seized over the same time period last year. We know more needs to be done to make more arrests, but there also needs to be accountability for the people who are dealing drugs, committing acts of violence, and making our communities less safe.'

Last month in New York City a group of men were pictured taking drugs out in the open outside a Harlem marketplace casually using needles to inject drugs into their arms.

The men were pictured sitting underneath a railway surrounded by bags of their belongings and an overturned Citi bike, and photos of the block the following day show even more men shooting up drugs at the site.

The scene comes despite Democratic Mayor Eric Adam's vow to crackdown on homelessness and crime in the city, which is up nearly 40 percent from last year.

New Yorkers have been growing weary over the latest spike in violence and crimes on the city streets and subways.

While murders and shootings are down 10 and roughly five percent respectively from 2021, overall crime in the Big Apple is up 39.24 percent so far in 2022.

	<p>That includes a 19 percent rise in felony assaults, a nearly 15 percent increase in rapes and a 40 percent jump in robberies.</p> <p>Vagrancy has also been on the rise in the city, with Adams ordering wave after wave of officers to take down homeless encampments throughout the city since March.</p> <p>City officials said police have taken down more than 300 camps throughout the five boroughs, but the homeless continue to rebuild their encampments, claiming that the city's homeless shelters are 'dangerous' and not an adequate solution to its vagrancy problem.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 West faces what scientists warned for years
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/06/16/us/southwest-drought-flooding-climate/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)The West saw an aspect of the climate crisis play out this week that scientists have warned of for years.</p> <p>In the middle of a prolonged, water shortage-inducing megadrought, one area, Yellowstone, was overwhelmed by drenching rainfall and rapid snowmelt that -- instead of replenishing the ground over a matter of weeks or months -- created a torrent of flash flooding that ripped out roads and bridges and caused severe damage to one of the country's most cherished national parks.</p> <p>In the meantime, drought conditions persisted in the Southwest, where water is desperately needed to replenish the country's largest reservoirs, and provide relief to regions tormented by record-setting wildfires.</p> <p>The latest update in the US Drought Monitor on Thursday showed the major contrast between the wet Northwest and the hot and dry Southwest. This feast-or-famine contrast is a pattern the climate crisis tends to amplify: extremes on both ends of the spectrum, with the pendulum sometimes swinging suddenly from one side to the other.</p> <p>Across the Pacific Northwest, drought conditions improved significantly over the past several weeks, with the areas in severe drought falling from a high of 55% in April to 25% this week.</p> <p>"Much of the Northern Tier states experienced beneficial rainfall and near to below-normal temperatures, predominantly leading to drought improvements from the Pacific Northwest to the Northern Plains," the Drought Monitor noted.</p> <p>But this persistent and active storm track, which continues to bring rain and snow to the Northwest, has largely missed California and the Southwest.</p> <p>The US Bureau of Reclamation projected this week that Arizona, Nevada and California would see even more significant cuts to their Colorado River water allotments starting next year.</p> <p>Federal officials make those determinations on a year-by-year basis every August. Lake Mead, the nation's largest reservoir which serves millions of people in the Southwest, is already running well below what last year's projections suggested, even in its worst-case scenario. Last August, the bureau predicted the reservoir would most likely be at 1,059 feet above sea level at the end of this month, and 1,057 feet at worst. But it's now around 1,045 feet.</p> <p>In New Mexico, where two of the largest fires in state history are still burning, the drought summary noted that temperatures were running around 5 to 10 degrees Fahrenheit above average, which are worsening drought conditions in parts of western and southern New Mexico.</p>

	<p>More than 50% of the state is in exceptional drought, the highest classification in the drought monitor, up from zero in January. This extreme dryness is playing a major role in fueling a fire year that is pacing to be the worst on record.</p> <p>A recent study from the federal government's Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico found that parts of the Upper Colorado River Basin, including the states of Colorado, Wyoming and Utah, will see earlier peak streamflow because of earlier rapid snowmelt, and up to 60% reduction in snow in the coming decades.</p> <p>"We're definitely looking at a hotter future," Katrina Bennett, hydrologist with the lab and lead author of the study, told CNN. "There will be more of that wet to dry sort of scenarios we're seeing, but regardless, we're going to see more minimum streamflow, increase in drier soils and lower snowpacks, which all together will lead to likelihood of drought increasing across the board especially in the upper areas where we really haven't seen that intense drought stress yet."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/17 China launches 3rd aircraft carrier
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-launches-third-aircraft-carrier-advancing-naval-ambitions-11655452424?mod=hp_listb_pos2
GIST	<p>HONG KONG—China has launched its third aircraft carrier, its largest and most sophisticated to date, advancing its ambitions to build a modern oceangoing navy that can project power around the globe.</p> <p>Christened the Fujian, after the coastal province that sits closest to the island democracy of Taiwan, the new carrier entered the waters at Shanghai's Jiangnan Shipyard during a launch ceremony on Friday attended by Gen. Xu Qiliang, a member of China's 25-member Politburo and vice chairman of the Communist Party's Central Military Commission, which commands the armed forces, according to state media reports.</p> <p>The Fujian is China's first indigenously designed and built aircraft carrier, displacing more than 80,000 tons when fully loaded and equipped with electromagnetic catapults for launching aircraft. The vessel will undergo mooring tests and sea trials, according to the government-run Xinhua News Agency, which didn't elaborate.</p> <p>The Wall Street Journal reported earlier this month that the carrier could be launched within weeks, citing satellite imagery. It wasn't clear how long the Fujian's sea trials would last, or when it might enter active service.</p> <p>Analysts say the Fujian's launch underscored Beijing's progress in modernizing its navy, a key component in Chinese leader Xi Jinping's ambitions to turn China into a first-rate military power capable of projecting force over greater distances and going toe-to-toe with Western rivals.</p> <p>China's first aircraft carrier was a refurbished vessel built from a Soviet-made hull purchased from Ukraine in 1998. Its second carrier, commissioned in late 2019, was constructed using a design based largely on the first Soviet one. Both vessels lack aircraft-launching catapults that are standard on American carriers, and instead deploy jets using "ski-jump" ramps that limit the payloads that aircraft can carry.</p> <p>The Fujian offers greater operational capability with its electromagnetic catapult system, but the vessel is nonetheless smaller and deemed by some Western military experts as likely to be less capable than American carriers of the Nimitz and Gerald R. Ford classes, which can carry more aircraft and sail far longer without refueling.</p> <p>The Pentagon, in its annual report to Congress last year on China's military, said the new Chinese carrier could enter service in 2024. The vessel's size and catapult-launch system "will enable it to support additional fighter aircraft, fixed wing early-warning aircraft, and more rapid flight operations and thus extend the reach and effectiveness of its carrier based strike aircraft," it said.</p>

	<p>Beijing also is developing new versions of fighter and electronic attack jets that would launch from its aircraft carriers, and enhanced anti-submarine warfare capabilities to protect both its carriers and its own submarines, the Pentagon said in its latest report on Chinese military power.</p> <p>China has what many experts consider to be the largest navy in the world, with a fleet of about 355 ships and submarines, according to the Pentagon.</p> <p>Even so, the U.S. Navy remains the world leader in terms of aircraft carriers, with 11 such vessels in active service, as well as nine amphibious assault ships that can deploy aircraft.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Oregon quakes not precursor 'Big One'
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3519878/oregon-earthquakes-not-precursor-big-one/
GIST	<p>You can take a breath of relief — the earthquakes that occurred in the Pacific Ocean off the Oregon coast this week are not a precursor of the “Big One.”</p> <p>Several earthquakes rattled the waters a few hundred miles west of Newport, Ore. early Wednesday morning, ranging from magnitudes of 3.8 to 5.6.</p> <p>Harold Tobin, director of the Pacific Northwest Seismic Network and a professor in the Department of Earth and Space Sciences at the University of Washington, said these Pacific Ocean earthquakes are very typical and had nothing to do with the Cascadia Subduction Zone, where the North American Plate and Juan de Fuca Plate meet. The Cascadia Subduction Zone is the fault that will one day cause the “Big One” — the 9.0 magnitude earthquake that happens every 300 years or so.</p> <p>“This is in an area that actually has quite a lot of earthquakes, so this is not at all unusual,” Tobin said of the Oregon coast rumblers, adding, “Earthquakes like this are incredibly common out there — we see them literally every year — and it’s not connected directly to anything that would change the situation with the Cascadia Subduction Zone.”</p> <p>Tobin said the earthquakes were along the Blanco Transform Fault, between the Juan de Fuca Plate and Pacific Plate.</p> <p>“I would not see these earthquakes as any kind of a warning sign or a precursor of something happening that we should be more concerned about close to shore,” he said. “This is sort of business as usual for plate tectonics out in the Pacific Ocean.”</p> <p>Still, Tobin said these smaller quakes are a good reminder to be prepared for that larger earthquake. There is an estimated 15% chance the “Big One” will happen in the next 50 years.</p> <p>“Any earthquake offshore is just a reminder that we know that there is the potential for a very large and damaging earthquake with a tsunami from the offshore part of the Pacific Northwest,” Tobin said. “It’s not a matter of if, it’s just a matter of when that will happen.”</p> <p>Tobin said the biggest earthquake mistake that Puget Sound area residents make is not ensuring their houses are in shape to withstand a large quake by, for example, retrofitting older homes. He also noted that local governments need to make upgrades to buildings like schools.</p> <p>It is also a good idea for individual families to have a go-bag of food, water and supplies on-hand, as well as a plan for where the family members will meet up in the event of a disaster. Tobin’s motto is, “Prepare, don’t despair.”</p> <p>“We don’t know whether the so-called ‘Big One’ is going to come a hundred years from now or next week, it could happen really in any place in that kind of timespan, so the more preparation you do, the</p>

	better,” Tobin said. “There are a lot of really substandard school buildings, housing and industrial buildings all around the state ... and I’d really like to see all of the different levels of government, and the voters who have to pass bond measures, take that seriously.”
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HEADLINE	06/16 KCSO responds to audit of racial bias
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3520995/king-county-sheriff-responds-to-audit-revealing-disproportionate-amount-of-arrests-made-based-on-ethnicity/
GIST	<p>A King County audit released Tuesday revealed racial disparities in arrests and uses of force, a lack of comprehensive data to analyze the role of race in officer relations, and highlighted several steps the King County Sheriff’s Office can take to improve its equity and transparency.</p> <p>Black people make up 7% of King County, but account for 25% of the arrest in the county, according to the report.</p> <p>“This means black people are 350% more likely to be arrested by the King County Sheriff’s Office on a per capita basis,” Gee Scott, co-host of the Gee and Ursula Show on KIRO Newsradio, said on air.</p> <p>“The auditor took the raw data, but in their audit, they do say they did not look at the individual situation,” said King County Sheriff Patti Cole-Tindall on the Gee and Ursula Show. “So we don’t know what the underlying facts were, and what led to the arrest or to the use of force. And I am committed to doing a thorough analysis to figure out what were those underlying facts.”</p> <p>Cole-Tindall does believe that Seattle’s law enforcement can improve, and acknowledging the racial disparities is the first step to addressing this issue.</p> <p>“I think it is important we need to start collecting the race data,” Cole-Tindall said. “But the other thing I didn’t mention earlier is there’s a county ordinance that prevents us from collecting race data, so that would need to be corrected.”</p> <p>Cole-Tindall is referring to the King County Ordinance KCC 2.15.010.G. The King County Sheriff’s Office collects racial data on only about 4% of its service calls, according to the audit.</p> <p>Hispanic residents of King County are 50% more likely to have force used on them, while Black people are 29% more likely to have force used on them. Meanwhile, white people are 35% less likely to experience use of force, according to the report.</p> <p>“I did not thoroughly understand the methodology used by the auditor, we met with them a number of times,” Cole-Tindall said in response to the statistics. “And that’s why we need to do our own analysis that can complement what they have done. So I’m not suggesting that their numbers are incorrect. I’m saying that this picture is incomplete.”</p> <p>Cole-Tindall also stressed that she believes her deputies don’t stop people based on their skin color, ethnicity, or socio-economic background.</p> <p>The audit also referenced the amount of times force was used; 619 times over a three-year period. “We use force very, very rarely,” Cole-Tindall said. “We use force six-hundredths of a percent. Under a percent in those one million calls for service.”</p> <p>Cole-Tindall had no comment on the statistics presented in the report describing that white officers use force twice as often as officers of other ethnicities, but wants to investigate the numbers further and find solutions accordingly.</p> <p>“I want to know if these numbers are actually solid and the statistics like the one you just said that our white officers use force more frequently than our officers that are Asian and Black,” Cole-Tindall said.</p>

	<p>“And then let’s figure it out. We already have the anti-bias training. We already have some other ESJ training, but what else can we do to impact that outcome?”</p> <p>Alongside the audit, The Office of Law Enforcement Oversight released its annual report last week regarding investigations of misconduct complaints made against employees of the King County Sheriff’s Office.</p> <p>The report identified that, in 2021, there were 428 complaints opened by the department, totaling more than 800 allegations. 60% of the complaints were made by members of the community while the rest were made by employees in the department.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Climate disasters strike before summer
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/06/16/summer-climate-disasters/
GIST	<p>In eastern Montana and Wyoming, massive flooding has destroyed bridges, swept away homes, and forced the evacuation of more than 10,000 visitors from Yellowstone National Park. Half a million households in the Great Lakes and Ohio Valley lost power earlier this week after violent thunderstorms swept through.</p> <p>And a record-setting heat wave pushed temperatures into the triple digits from Nebraska to South Carolina, leaving more than 100 million Americans under heat warnings and killing at least 2,000 cattle in Kansas.</p> <p>The official first day of summer has not even arrived and already the country is overheated, waterlogged and suffering. Extreme weather is here early, testing the nation’s readiness and proving, once again, that overlapping climate disasters are now becoming more frequent and upending Americans’ lives.</p> <p>“Summer has become the danger season where you see these kinds of events happening earlier, more frequently, and co-occurring,” said Rachel Licker, principal climate scientist at the Union of Concerned Scientists, a research and advocacy group. “It just shows you how vulnerable our infrastructure is and that this is just going to get increasingly problematic.”</p> <p>The Midwest is at the center of this shift. Hit with an unseasonably early heat wave in May that smashed records, the region has since been buffeted by more heat as well as severe thunderstorms and tornadoes. Hundred of thousands of Midwesterners lost power earlier this week as temperatures soared into the upper 90s.</p> <p>Licker, who lives in Madison, Wis., sought refuge at the library. But some of her elderly neighbors had to be helped out of their sweltering homes, where they had been trapped after finding they could not open their garage doors without electricity.</p> <p>The power came back the following day, but by Wednesday, Licker was battling severe weather once again, sheltering from tornadoes in her basement. That afternoon, the National Weather Service issued 10 different weather advisories and notices for the region, including an excessive heat warning.</p> <p>“It’s been really wild,” she said.</p> <p>This deluge had deadly consequences: A 10-year-old boy was swept away in a Milwaukee drainage ditch following severe thunderstorms there.</p> <p>Several experts say these types of simultaneously occurring disasters reveal the extent to which Americans remain unprepared for the escalating impacts of climate change. Downed power lines, homes swept away amid flooding and overwhelmed storm water systems highlight how little progress governments have made toward girding communities for extreme weather.</p>

Yet, they caution, there are limits to how much the nation can adapt. The world has [already warmed between 1.1 and 1.2 degrees Celsius](#) (2.2 degrees Fahrenheit) above the preindustrial average. If countries continue emitting carbon pollution at historically high rates, the future will be hotter — and harder to bear.

“We cannot take a punch from one these hazards alone, forget about three or four of them simultaneously,” said Camilo Mora, a climate scientist at the University of Hawaii at Manoa who studies cascading disasters. “The idea that we can keep emitting greenhouse gases and buy our way out of it later with adaptation just doesn’t make any sense.”

Mora and other scientists’ [research](#) suggests that by 2100, unless humans act quickly to cut greenhouse gas emissions, some parts of the world could experience as many as six climate-related disasters at the same time. Coastal areas are likely to be hit the hardest, since they are affected not only by extreme heat and intensifying wildfires, but also by rising sea levels and increasingly devastating hurricanes.

Across the United States, climate change is already worsening the damage from extreme weather. Between 2017 and 2021, more than 8 million acres, on average, burned each year — more than double the average between 1987 and 1991, the Congressional Budget Office found in a report released Thursday. While much of the West endures an unprecedented drought, a [study](#) published last year found that the Northeast has seen a 53 percent increase in extreme rainfall since 1996.

President Biden on Thursday approved Montana’s request for a major disaster declaration, a move that provides federal aid to three counties devastated by this week’s flooding. At a briefing Wednesday, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said the administration was also closely monitoring the record temperatures affecting much of the country.

A significant heat dome has been crowding weather maps over the Lower 48 states for the past week, bringing blistering temperatures that have toppled records. Highs have risen 10 to 20 degrees above average in some parts, and some places have seen their hottest and most humid weather ever observed during June.

In Montana and Wyoming, heavy weekend rains converged with rapid snowmelt, resulting in devastating flooding that [destroyed miles of roads and bridges](#) in Yellowstone National Park and damaged hundreds of homes in surrounding communities. No one was reported hurt or killed.

With the Yellowstone River running at historically high levels, Billings, Montana’s largest city, was unable to operate its water treatment plant, which pumps water from the river. The plant shut down late Tuesday but, by Thursday morning, was running again. Further east in Livingston, the city’s hospital was evacuated after its driveway flooded, leaving no safe way to enter or exit the facility.

Meteorologists said the deluge was months in the making. While most of the country saw warmer than normal weather over the last 60 days, cooler air hovered over the Pacific Northwest and Northern Rockies, delaying snowmelt in the high mountains. An unusual late-season storm in May dumped even more heavy snow on the region.

Then, late last week, a 3,000-mile long jet of moisture called an atmospheric river began soaking the Pacific Northwest, delivering record-setting rainfall. When it reached the Yellowstone River Basin, it released a burst of rain and a pulse of warm air, deluging the region and simultaneously melting the equivalent of an additional 2 to 5 inches of water from the snow, according to the National Weather Service.

On the 1-to-5 scale for such atmospheric river events that’s used by Center for Western Weather and Water Extremes, it was a 5.

Marty Ralph, who directs the center in San Diego, said it was “remarkably unusual” to see an atmospheric river so intense in June. Atmospheric rivers are most common in the West between late fall and early spring.

Business owners in Gardiner, a gateway community just north of Yellowstone National Park, are facing the possibility of a summer without tourists. Yellowstone remained closed Thursday. Though parts of the park may reopen next week, the northern portion of the park, which saw most of the damage, is [not expected to reopen to visitors for months](#).

“The long-term health of Gardiner is going to depend on whether they get public access to the loop road in Yellowstone,” said Richard Park, owner of Parks’ Fly Shop. With large sections of road washed out between Gardiner and Mammoth just inside Yellowstone, businesses that cater to tourists will be strangled, he said.

For Alexis Bonogofsky — a sheep ranger and program manager for the World Wildlife Fund, an advocacy group — the flood represents only the latest in a series of disastrous events to strike her family farm just south of Billings.

Severe drought left her land parched last summer. Swarms of grasshoppers devoured what little grass grew and she had to sell some of her livestock because she didn’t have enough feed. Earlier this week, the Yellowstone River flooded 80 acres of Bonogofsky’s pastureland, damaging hundreds of feet of fence that kept her 30 ewes and 10 goats confined.

Bonogofsky said she fears residents are getting used to wave after wave of crises.

“Humans adapt quickly to these kinds of events and they’re becoming normal to us instead of seeing what’s going on,” she said. “We’re going to see these forms of natural disasters more frequently, and I hope that at some point people will realize what’s happening and start addressing the root cause.”

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HEADLINE	06/16 Coups in Africa from China, Russia clout
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jun/16/coups-abound-africa-chinese-russian-clout-increase/
GIST	<p>A surge in the number of military coups that have brought down democratic governments across Africa can be traced to China’s rising regional and global influence, according to regional experts, who also blame successive U.S. administrations for failing to develop a more coherent strategy for investing in and bolstering democracy on the continent.</p> <p>Seven coups and coup attempts over the past two years — the highest rate in more than four decades — have put power-thirsty military cliques in control of such resource-rich nations as Chad, Mali, Sudan, Burkina Faso and Guinea, while unsuccessful coups occurred in Guinea-Bissau and Niger.</p> <p>Analysts point to a range of root causes, including ethnic and sectarian divisions in several countries in play, as well as corruption and mismanagement by civilian governments and weak or corrupted civil institutions in countries where democracies had been struggling to gain a foothold.</p> <p>However, there is also the less-publicized China-Russia factor. A push for influence and profits from the two authoritarian governments has directly boosted anti-democratic forces in several vulnerable African countries.</p> <p>“China has created a permission structure for coup plotters in Africa because plotters know Russia and China will work together to stop any sanctions the United Nations Security Council might try to impose on the plotter as punishment for carrying out a coup,” said Joseph Sany, who heads the Africa Center at the United States Institute of Peace.</p> <p>“China and Russia have veto power on the Security Council, so in this way they have helped to create a climate of impunity and therefore an opening for any potential coup plotters who may be out there in these African countries,” Mr. Sany told The Washington Times in an interview.</p>

While the extent to which such dynamics may or may not be motivating coup plotters to act, there is little question that both China and Russia have used vetoes to shield and curry favor with regimes that have swept to power via a coup over the past two years.

One of the more prominent examples has involved the military junta that seized power two nearly years ago in Mali. In late 2021, Beijing and Moscow blocked proposed U.N. sanctions against the junta after its leaders failed to follow through on a vow to hold elections and return Mali to civilian rule.

It is not clear that China and Russia stand to benefit from perpetuating the chaotic military government now in control of the former French colony. Mali holds untapped gold, uranium and copper reserves but has been split by militant and Islamic extremist insurgencies in recent decades.

Coups like the one in Mali in 2020 — the country's second seizure of power in a decade — rarely bring the kind of stability necessary for such resources to be tapped in a way that might generate economic stability, analysts say.

"In many cases ... coups further undermine stability because military leaders who stage them often fail to enact meaningful reforms, either due to their lack of experience governing or from a desire to maintain power once they have seized it," William A. Taylor, who wrote the 2018 book "Contemporary Security Issues in Africa," said in an email.

"Coups can result in political assassinations, ethno-religious violence and even civil wars," said Mr. Taylor, who teaches at Angelo State University in Texas. He stressed that the "specific causes of any particular coup d'état are complex, especially in Africa."

"While each instance is unique in circumstances, one common trait often stands out as a root cause: poor governance," Mr. Taylor said. "When state institutions fail, military coups can arise to challenge the existing regime. In that sense, the current upsurge in coups is a symptom of a pervasive lack of viable democratic institutions."

The surge in coups has caught the U.S. flat-footed, according to some experts. They say the Trump administration's often confrontational rhetoric on foreign policy did not resonate well across Africa and the Biden administration has mainly paid lip service to the plight of democracy on the continent while offering little concrete assistance.

Outpaced by China?

Christopher Rhodes, an Africa expert who lectures at Harvard and Boston University, has argued that Washington's failure to call out Egypt's military coup in the wake of the 2011 Arab Spring protests, when a democratically elected government dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood was ousted, contributed to a subsequent breakdown of a post-Cold War "anti-coup consensus" in Africa.

"Local populations have upheld their end of the bargain, as have regional blocs like the African Union," Mr. Rhodes wrote in an op-ed published last year by Al Jazeera. "But the international environment has returned to one that is, at best, permissive of military takeovers and, at worst, actively welcomes them as expedient ways to remove threatening or odious leaders."

"Backsliding on the part of Western powers, and the rise of autocrat-friendly China, have created an atmosphere that emboldens generals and military cliques to seize power," wrote Mr. Rhodes, who added that the breakdown of the anti-coup coalition has "led to military interventions re-emerging as a leading method by which power is transferred on the continent."

Secretary of State Antony Blinken noted the trend in a major speech during a November visit to Africa, but he focused the bulk of his remarks on Africa's potential as an emerging global economic power.

“This is a continent of young people — energized, innovative, hungry for jobs and opportunity,” Mr. Blinken said. “By 2025, more than half the population of Africa will be under age 25. By the year 2050, 1 in 4 people on Earth will be African.”

“When the 54-country African Continental Free Trade Area is fully implemented, it will comprise the fifth-largest economic bloc in the world, representing a huge source of jobs, consumers, innovation and power to shape the global economy,” the secretary of state said.

However, he had little to announce in the way of U.S. initiatives for backing democracy in Africa or channeling money toward infrastructure investment, which has been a mainstay of China’s growing influence on the continent.

Beijing has given out hundreds of billions of dollars in loans for infrastructure projects in African countries as part of President Xi Jinping’s Belt and Road financing initiative.

U.S. officials have criticized the Chinese program as “predatory,” with the goal of burdening economically weaker nations with debt that might later be relieved in exchange for Chinese government access to natural resources and other forms of influence.

Washington has struggled to offer concrete alternatives. The Trump administration ushered in reforms that included the creation of the U.S. International Development Finance Corp., backed with \$60 billion to inspire private investment in developing countries worldwide.

The Group of Seven leading industrial nations — the U.S., Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United Kingdom — have announced the Build Back Better World (B3W) initiative to inspire investment.

‘A complex link’

The Biden administration often references B3W. Mr. Blinken raised it in his Africa speech last year. It remains to be seen whether the White House has the geopolitical capital to steer the initiative toward tangible results.

The Institute of Peace’s Mr. Sany said neither the Trump administration nor the Biden administration has done enough to spur investment in Africa that could help democratic countries fend off coups by military juntas likely to seek loans and partnerships with autocratic powers like China and Russia.

“We have dropped the ball, unfortunately,” he told The Times.

He said Washington is active in terms of military-to-military relations with African nations and offers more aid than anyone else to the continent, but overall, U.S. diplomatic and economic engagement lags in comparison with what China has done over the past decade.

“There is a complex link between military engagement, diplomatic engagement, economic engagement and investments where China has been effective,” Mr. Sany said. “They have a strong command and control. That is the nature of the regime in China.”

China routinely tops the rankings of outside investors in the continent, and its money is paying off in influence, Phebe Wilson-Andoh said in a research paper last month for the Foreign Policy Research Institute.

“In 2020, nearly one-third of infrastructure projects in Africa worth at least \$50 million were built by Chinese companies. In addition, China is, in many areas, replacing the United States and Europe as trade partners with Africa,” she wrote. “Beijing has translated China’s growing economic footprint in Africa into geopolitical influence.”

	<p>Africa, she added, “has a wealth of economic opportunities for those nations willing to put in the effort. With its flair for bilateral and multilateral diplomacy and a long track record of attempting to forge meaningful relationships with African states, China has in many places supplanted the United States and Europe, at least in the minds of the leadership elites of many African countries.”</p> <p>In contrast, Mr. Sany said, Washington has struggled to forge the kind of interagency coordination needed to have a more positive impact on Africa, he said, adding that the \$60 billion put forward DFC is a good start but pales in comparison with the hundreds of billions of dollars in loans, grants and contracts that Beijing has doled out.</p> <p>“We have to leverage the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund” to compete with China in Africa, he said, but it “takes strategic vision and leadership. It takes a coherent Africa policy from the U.S.”</p> <p>He stressed that polling shows “African populations still identify with the values the U.S. stands for, including rule of law and transparency.”</p> <p>“We are losing time,” he said, “but it’s not too late.”</p>
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HEADLINE	06/17 Day 114 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/17/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-114-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hundreds of civilians sheltering at the Azot chemical plant in Sievierodonetsk are <u>no longer able to evacuate</u> because of the sustained Russian artillery barrages, officials say. Luhansk governor Serhiy Haidai told CNN 568 people, including 38 children, are taking refuge in the Azot plant. A pro-Russian separatist leader claimed Russian-backed forces would reopen a humanitarian corridor for civilians to leave the plant, the Interfax news agency reported. • The leaders of France, Germany and Italy have <u>vowed to support Ukraine’s bid to join the European Union on a visit to Kyiv</u>. Macron said all four EU leaders present supported the idea of granting an “immediate” EU candidate status to Ukraine. • Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov said Russia is “not ashamed of showing who we are” in an interview with the BBC. “We didn’t invade <u>Ukraine</u>, we declared a special military operation because we had absolutely no other way of explaining to the west that dragging Ukraine into Nato was a criminal act,” he said. • Nato says it is committed to providing equipment to maintain Ukraine’s right to self-defence, and will be making <u>more troop deployments on its eastern flank</u>. Nato’s secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, condemned “a relentless war of attrition against Ukraine” being waged by Russia, and said Nato continued to offer “unprecedented support so it can defend itself against Moscow’s aggression”. • The head of the UK’s armed forces says <u>Russia</u> has already “strategically lost” the war in Ukraine and is now a “more diminished power”. Admiral Sir Tony Radakin said Vladimir Putin had lost 25% of Russia’s land power for only “tiny” gains. In an interview with PA Media, he said Russia was running out of troops and advanced missiles and would never be able to take over all of Ukraine. • Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, <u>appeared as a hologram while referencing Star Wars</u> in an attempt to secure more aid from big tech firms. Zelenskiy told a crowd of hundreds at the VivaTech trade show in Paris on Thursday that Ukraine was offering technology firms a unique chance to rebuild the country as a fully digital democracy. • At least three civilians were killed and seven injured by a Russian airstrike in the eastern city of Lysychansk, according to local officials. The strike <u>hit a building where civilians were sheltering</u>, Luhansk governor Serhiy Haidai said. • An overnight Russian air-launched rocket strike hit a suburb of the northern Ukrainian city of Sumy, killing four and wounding six, according to officials. Regional governor Dmytro Zhyvtskyi <u>said another rocket strike hit the Dobropillia district</u>, which lies next to the Russian border, at 5am on Thursday, followed by 26 mortar rounds fired from across the border.

- **Children born in Ukraine’s Kherson region since 24 February will [automatically receive Russian citizenship](#), according to an official.** Kirill Stremousov, deputy head of the Russian-imposed military-civilian administration in the occupied Kherson region, claimed that thousands of citizens in the territory were applying for Russian citizenship. [Ukraine has repeatedly accused Russia of abducting children from its territory](#) and transferring them into Russia.
- **A Russian spy [tried and failed to secure an internship at the international criminal court](#) (ICC) using the false identity as a Brazilian citizen that he had built up for as long as a decade, according to Dutch intelligence.** Sergey Vladimirovich Cherkasov, 36, accused of being an agent of Russia’s GRU military intelligence, was detained when he arrived and sent back to Brazil the following day.
- **The UK announced a fresh wave of sanctions against Russia aimed at people involved with the “barbaric treatment of children in Ukraine”.** Those targeted by sanctions include the Russian children’s rights commissioner, [Maria Lvova-Belova](#), military commanders, Vladimir Mikhailovich and Patriarch Kirill, the head of the Russian Orthodox church.
- **The UK has [purchased and refurbished more than 20 long-range guns](#) – M109s – from a Belgian arms company which it is sending to Ukraine, Britain’s defence secretary, Ben Wallace, said.** Russia outnumbers Ukraine in artillery fire by 20 to 1 in some areas but allies are beginning to give Ukraine the long-range artillery and rocket systems that will enable its forces to win, he told Sky News.
- **Russia warned that gas flows to Europe via the Nord Stream 1 pipeline could be suspended, blaming problems with turbine repairs.** Russia’s ambassador to the EU, Vladimir Chizhov, told the state-owned news agency Ria [that a complete halt in gas flows in the pipeline](#), which supplies gas from Russia to Europe under the Baltic Sea, would be a “catastrophe” for Germany. Canada says it is in active discussions with Germany about a Siemens-made turbine equipment undergoing maintenance in Canada and unable to return due to sanctions.
- **Temporary silos on Ukraine’s border would prevent Russia from stealing Ukrainian grain and ensure the winter harvest is not lost due to a lack of storage,** US agriculture secretary Tom Vilsack said on Thursday. It follows comments from US President Joe Biden that temporary silos would be built along the border with Ukraine.
- **Zelenskiy accused Russia of being unwilling to look for a way to peace, claiming it will “decide for himself that the war must end”.** Ukrainian peace talks negotiator Mykhailo Podolyak also dismissed Russia’s most recent comments about being willing to continue negotiations as “[an attempt to deceive the world](#)”. Russia, he said, wanted to give the impression of being ready to talk while planning to stab Ukraine in the back.

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HEADLINE	06/17 UK military chief: Russia ‘strategically lost’
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/17/russia-has-strategically-lost-war-declares-uk-admiral-as-lavrov-says-no-shame-in-war-crimes
GIST	<p>The head of the UK’s armed forces has said Russia has already “strategically lost” the war in Ukraine and is now a “more diminished power”.</p> <p>Admiral Sir Tony Radakin said Russia was suffering heavy losses, running out of troops and advanced missiles and would never be able to take over all of Ukraine.</p> <p>“This is a dreadful mistake by Russia. Russia will never take control of Ukraine,” Tony Radakin told PA Media in an interview published on Friday.</p> <p>The country’s highest-ranking military officer said the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, had lost 25% of Russia’s land power for only “tiny” gains and it would emerge a “more diminished power” while strengthening Nato.</p> <p>“Russia has strategically lost already. Nato is stronger, Finland and Sweden are looking to join,” he said.</p>

Radakin said that while Putin may achieve “tactical successes” in the weeks to come, it had come at the expense of a quarter of his country’s army power for “tiny” gains and was running out of troops and hi-tech missiles.

“The Russian machine is grinding away, and it’s gaining a couple of – two, three, five – kilometres every day,” the admiral said.

“And Russia has vulnerabilities because it’s running out of people, it’s running out of hi-tech missiles.

“President Putin has used about 25% of his army’s power to gain a tiny amount of territory and 50,000 people either dead or injured. Russia is failing.”

Radakin’s claims echo British intelligence reports, the latest of which said some Russian battalion tactical groups (BTGs) – typically established at about 600 to 800 personnel – have only been able to muster as few as 30 soldiers.

Although Russia is achieving tactical success in the Donbas, these recent successes have come at “significant resource cost” and by concentrating force and fires on a single part of the overall campaign.

“Measured against Russia’s original plan, none of the strategic objectives have been achieved. In order for Russia to achieve any form of success will require continued huge investment of manpower and equipment, and is likely to take considerable further time,” a report read.

Against a backdrop of seemingly universal criticism of Russia’s near four-month campaign from the west, the Russian foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, gave an interview with the BBC on Thursday.

“We didn’t invade Ukraine,” he claimed. “We declared a special military operation because we had absolutely no other way of explaining to the west that dragging Ukraine into Nato was a criminal act.”

Responding to an official UN report detailing alleged war crimes against civilians committed by Russian forces in the Ukrainian village of Yahidne, in Chernihiv region, Lavrov was asked if that was “fighting Nazis”.

“It’s a great pity,” Lavrov said, “but international diplomats, including the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN secretary general and other UN representatives, are being put under pressure by the west. And very often they’re being used to amplify fake news spread by the west.

“Russia is not squeaky clean. Russia is what it is. And we are not ashamed of showing who we are.”

Addressing Moscow’s relations with the UK, Lavrov maintained he no longer believed there was any “room for manoeuvre”.

“Because both [Boris] Johnson and [Liz] Truss say openly that we should defeat Russia, we should force Russia to its knees. Go on, then, do it!”

The Kremlin on Thursday warned against new western weapons supplies to Ukraine as the French president, Emmanuel Macron, the German chancellor, Olaf Scholz, and the Italian prime minister, Mario Draghi, visited Kyiv.

“I would like to hope that the leaders of these three states and the president of Romania will not only focus on supporting Ukraine by further pumping Ukraine with weapons,” said the Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, adding it would be “absolutely useless and will cause further damage to the country”.

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SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/jun/17/hologram-zelenskiy-promises-ukraine-will-defeat-the-empire
GIST	<p>Volodymyr Zelenskiy referenced Star Wars and the second world war as the Ukrainian president appeared as a hologram at a conference in Paris to seek aid from big tech firms.</p> <p>He told a crowd of hundreds at the VivaTech trade show that he was offering technology firms a unique chance to rebuild Ukraine as a fully digital democracy.</p> <p>He asked for help on the terms of lend-lease – the way in which the United States helped the Allies during the second world war, offering aid without payment but on the understanding that hardware would be returned.</p> <p>“It’s unusual for presidents or heads of government to use a hologram to address people but this is not the only aspect of Star Wars that we are putting into practice,” he said.</p> <p>“We will defeat the empire too,” he said, likening Russian forces to the enemy in Star Wars.</p> <p>He said the government would lay out the specifics of a plan that would create a digital government at a conference in Switzerland in the coming weeks.</p> <p>“No other country in the world will offer you such a chance to use the most advanced technologies at a state level,” he said.</p> <p>“It’s an experiment and a digital revolution, and the modernisation of the current system all at the same time.”</p> <p>Ukraine has heavily leveraged technology during the war with Russia, utilising crypto communities to raise funds and successfully appealing to Elon Musk to supply the infrastructure for satellite-based internet services.</p> <p>Russia invaded Ukraine on 24 February and has waged war on cities across the east and the Black Sea coast, in what Ukrainians say is an attempt to destroy their country.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Israel coordinates w/US on Syria airstrikes?
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-secretly-reviews-israels-plans-for-strikes-against-iranian-targets-in-syria-11655405162?mod=hp_lead_pos3
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON—Israel secretly coordinates with the U.S. on many of the airstrikes it carries out in Syria as the allies face a battlefield crowded with militant groups, Iranian-backed militias and foreign militaries, according to current and former U.S. officials.</p> <p>American officials have said little about Israel’s bombing missions, which have been aimed at interrupting Tehran’s flow of advanced weapons to Lebanese Hezbollah and diminishing Iran’s military forces and proxies in Syria.</p> <p>Behind the scenes, however, many of Israel’s missions for several years have been reviewed in advance for approval by senior officials at U.S. Central Command and at the Pentagon, current and former officials say.</p> <p>The U.S. aim is to ensure that Israel’s bombing raids don’t interfere with the U.S.-led military campaign against Islamic State militants whose self-declared caliphate has been destroyed but who have been attempting to mount a comeback.</p>

The formal coordination hasn't been previously reported, and the secrecy surrounding it shows how Washington has sought to support its Israeli ally without being drawn into Israel's shadow war against Iran.

The main focus of the U.S. review are Israeli missions in eastern Syria that pass near the al-Tanf garrison, a U.S. outpost near the Syria-Jordan border that sits below one of the Israeli attack routes.

The vast majority of those Israeli airstrikes have been approved by the U.S. The U.S. military doesn't help the Israelis pick their targets. Nor does the U.S. review all Israeli operations carried out in Syria, current and former officials say.

It is a "well-developed and deliberate process," one former U.S. official said.

A representative of the Israel Defense Forces declined to comment, and the Pentagon declined to discuss the procedure.

"In northeast Syria and in the vicinity of al-Tanf, the U.S. mission is solely securing the enduring defeat of ISIS, working with our local partners," said a U.S. defense official. "We won't discuss the details of the steps we take to reduce the risk to our forces and to the mission."

Iran has already sought to pressure the U.S. to persuade the Israelis to ratchet back their strikes. In October, Iran directed a drone attack against the al-Tanf garrison, which American officials concluded was in response to an Israeli attack against Iranian personnel. No Americans were hurt in that raid.

"There is tacit American support for the Israelis acting to blunt the Iranians' efforts to spread weapons around and build their leverage throughout the region. But there has also been a consistent hesitancy about wanting any fingerprints on this," said Dennis Ross, a former U.S. Middle East peace envoy who is now counselor at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a Washington think tank.

"It would be irresponsible if there was not deconfliction and coordination because of the risk that we could have an inadvertent problem," Mr. Ross added.

Israel has long been the U.S.'s closest military ally in the Middle East, but Washington has sometimes sought to play down the relationship as it confronted foreign-policy challenges in the region.

During the 1991 Persian Gulf War, Israel secretly provided mine-clearing equipment to the U.S.-led coalition that sought to evict Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's troops from Kuwait. The U.S. concern at the time was that an overt Israeli role could fracture the anti-Iraq alliance, which included Saudi, Egyptian and Syrian troops.

For decades, the U.S. military's responsibility for Israel was also allocated to its European command. That arrangement enabled U.S. generals in the Middle East to interact with Arab states without highlighting Washington's close association with Israel, which at the time was seen as an adversary in the Arab world.

Growing ties between Israeli and Arab states, including the assessment that the nations share a common enemy in Iran, had altered the landscape.

During his last month in office, President Trump ordered that the Central Command area of coverage be expanded to include Israel, a development U.S. officials hope will foster closer military ties between Israel and Arab nations, including on air defense against Iranian threats.

The conflict in Syria has posed a different challenge for the Biden administration, which has kept about 1,000 troops in northeast Syria and at the al-Tanf garrison.

Since 2014, the U.S. military objective in Syria has been to defeat Islamic State. The U.S. began airstrikes that year against ISIS militants. The following year, the U.S. sent special-operations forces to the country to join with Syrian fighters who in 2019 finally collapsed Islamic State's caliphate.

The U.S., however, has been just one player in the arena. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has battled Syrian rebels. Russian warplanes have bombed the Syrian leader's foes. And Turkish forces have ventured into northern Syria to fight Syrian Kurds.

The growing presence of Iranian forces and Iranian-backed militias, who have helped support the Assad regime, has added to the complicated scene.

The U.S. has carried out several airstrikes and artillery attacks in Syria and far western Iraq against Iranian-backed militias in response to rocket and drone attacks on U.S. troops.

But it has sought to do so [without escalating military tensions](#) with Tehran, which the U.S. still hopes might agree to revive the 2015 accord that constrains Iran's nuclear program.

Israel hasn't hesitated to strike Iranian operatives or Iranian-backed militias. Since 2017, Israel has carried out more than 400 [airstrikes in Syria](#) and other parts of the Middle East, the Israeli military told The Wall Street Journal in April.

Israel's targets have included drone bases operated by Iranian military advisers and precision-guided missile systems bound for Hezbollah fighters in Lebanon. The air campaign, which Israeli leaders have called the ["war between the wars,"](#) is aimed at weakening Tehran's ability to strike Israel in case a major conflict between the two adversaries breaks out.

To avoid friction with Moscow, Israel has used a hotline to notify the Russian military at its Khmeimim base in Syria of its impending strikes.

The Israeli strikes have also required close consultation with the U.S.

The challenge arose in 2017 when Israeli aircraft began to fly near the al-Tanf garrison to skirt Syrian air defenses. Israel provides details of the missions it plans to the Central Command in advance. The command conducts a review and also informs the U.S. defense secretary and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who can conduct their own assessment, current and former officials say.

"Since Israel is sensitive to the fact that what happens in the region may fly back at U.S. troops, I would guess there are at least prewarnings and not just deconfliction," said Assaf Orion, a retired Israeli brigadier general who served in the planning directorate of the Israel Defense Forces, but he added that he had no direct knowledge of the procedure.

While the U.S. has generally signed off on the strikes it reviews, current and former officials say the U.S. has sometimes asked Israel for modifications.

In at least two instances, the U.S. has asked Israel to pause its strikes to ensure they didn't complicate the battle space at a time when the U.S. military was involved in sensitive operations. One such instance occurred when the U.S. was planning the 2019 Delta Force raid in northwest Syria that killed Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the ISIS leader. Another took place when the American-led campaign against ISIS militants in the Euphrates River Valley was particularly active.

A significant portion of the Israeli airstrikes don't pass near the al-Tanf garrison and aren't reviewed by the U.S., current and former officials say. Those included a strike last Friday at the Damascus airport that Middle East news reports said was carried out by Israel to interrupt the flow of missile technology to Hezbollah but which the Israeli government hasn't publicly acknowledged.

The U.S. military also doesn't review Israeli airstrikes in Iraq, which Israel hasn't officially confirmed but U.S. officials say have occurred.

Iran has put military pressure on Washington to restrain Israel.

In October 2021, five Iranian drones attacked the al-Tanf garrison. That outpost sits near a highway that runs from Iraq to southern Syria, which Iran-backed militias would like to use as a supply route. The U.S. and its allies have shot down several Iranian-made drones that flew near that area and in other parts of eastern Syria since 2017.

A U.S. official said that after the October attack, Iran signaled in a confidential message that the attack was in response to Israeli airstrikes against Iranian operatives. Iran didn't publicly assume responsibility, though the drone attack was praised in Iranian news reports.

That attack, which U.S. officials assess was carried out by Iran or Iranian-backed militias, led to top-level deliberations within the Biden administration about how to deter Tehran without triggering an escalating series of strikes and counterstrikes.

As the base had been evacuated in advance and no Americans had been harmed, the White House told the Pentagon that it should ensure that any military action shouldn't lead to casualties—civilian or enemy, current and former officials say. Working within those constraints, two targets were considered: an empty training area and a building that had been previously bombed.

In the end, the Biden administration opted instead for imposing new economic sanctions and sending a message to Tehran through an intermediary: Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi. It said that the U.S. reserved the right to respond at a time and place of its choosing, a U.S. official said.

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HEADLINE	06/16 Airlines on notice: be prepared for summer
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/buttigieg-to-airlines-be-prepared-for-a-busy-summer-travel-season-11655424986?mod=hp_lista_pos4
GIST	<p>Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg is putting airlines on notice he wants summer operations to go smoothly, as carriers gear up for what is expected to be a busy travel season.</p> <p>In a virtual meeting with airline CEOs and industry officials Thursday, Mr. Buttigieg pressed airlines to detail steps they're taking heading into the July 4 holiday and the rest of the summer, according to people familiar with the discussion.</p> <p>He asked airlines to stress-test the schedules they have planned for the coming months to ensure they have enough staffing to reliably operate flights and can recover when things go wrong, some of the people said. He also urged the airlines to improve customer service after flights are canceled, one of the people said, in the wake of customer complaints that airline call centers have been overwhelmed.</p> <p>Airline executives have said they're expecting record travel demand this summer as restrictions that were put in place during the coronavirus pandemic are lifted and more people feel comfortable taking trips. But carriers are also still restoring operations and staffing levels after encouraging thousands of workers to leave in an effort to conserve cash when demand was low.</p> <p>Several carriers have said they have already been paring back summer flying plans to account for staffing shortages and other growing pains as travel rebounds. Airlines have also been working with the Federal Aviation Administration to address problems that have cropped up in crowded airspace, particularly in Florida.</p> <p>A combination of severe weather and staffing challenges contributed to around 2,800 flight cancellations over the Memorial Day weekend holiday last month.</p>

	<p>Those stumbles were “a signal that [airlines] need to do more to successfully deliver the reliable service that airline passengers want and deserve,” Annie Petsonk, another Transportation Department official, wrote to airlines officials ahead of the meeting, noting that airlines had received billions of dollars in government aid to avoid laying off workers.</p> <p>Airlines for America, which represents major carriers, said Thursday that it appreciated the opportunity to meet with Mr. Buttigieg. In a letter last week to lawmakers who had raised concerns about the Memorial Day cancellations and delays, A4A President Nicholas Calio said a confluence of factors, including bad storms and staffing shortages at air-traffic control, contributed to the problems.</p> <p>Acting FAA Administrator Billy Nolen also attended Thursday’s meeting, according to some of the people. The FAA has said it would increase air-traffic-control staffing, change some flight routes and share more information with the industry to help address recent snarls in the crowded Florida airspace.</p> <p>Roughly 1,500 U.S. flights were scrubbed Thursday, according to data-tracking service FlightAware, as thunderstorms along the East Coast challenged operations, with several major airports subject to ground stops and delays that limited takeoffs and landings throughout the day.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Visitors' spending bounces back Tri-Cities
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/visitor-spending-bouncing-back-in-tri-cities
GIST	<p>TRI-CITIES, Wash. — Visitor spending is bouncing back in the Tri-Cities after taking a hit during the pandemic.</p> <p>"Hotels were empty and we lost businesses," Visit Tri-Cities CEO Michael Novakovich said. "It was a pretty significant hit to the tourism and hospitality industry."</p> <p>The 2021 tourism economic impacts numbers show visitor spending in the Tri-Cities exceeded \$489 million, a 41% increase from 2020.</p> <p>Novakovich said Tri-Cities' best year for tourism was in 2019, but this year is already looking to potentially surpass those numbers.</p> <p>"Our first quarter of this year beat what happened in 2019 and it's looking like we are going to finish this year stronger than we saw at our best year ever in 2019," Novakovich said. "Tourism has rebounded significantly. We have sports teams on the field, leisure visitors are here and we are seeing the festivals and events come back which is so exciting."</p> <p>He said one piece that's lagging is meetings and conventions.</p> <p>"I think people are a little reserved, making sure everything is going to work out alright, but we're seeing activity and we're excited about it," Novakovich said.</p> <p>He said visitor spending in 2021 generated \$51 million in local and state tourism-generated sales tax revenue.</p> <p>This helps fund police and fire, schools, roadways and beautification projects in the area.</p> <p>"It truly touches every Tri-Citian and it helps to build a safe, beautiful, educated, employed community that all of us get to enjoy," Novakovich said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Student loan borrower's payment pause
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/money/student-loan-borrowers-payment-pause

GIST	<p>A recent report from the Federal Reserve showed that more than half of student loan borrowers did not make payments during the payment pause brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>When conducting its study, the Federal Reserve removed all student loans that were cosigned from the data in order to take out many private student loans. The central bank, citing MeasureOne, said 91% of private undergraduate loans and 64% of private graduate loans are cosigned. The remaining group consisted of 20 million borrowers who hold \$725 billion in student loan debt.</p> <p>Before the pandemic began, this group paid a total of \$5.3 billion per month toward their student loan debt payments, or an average monthly payment of \$260 per borrower. But from August 2020 to December 2021, 60% of these borrowers did not make any payments on their student loans.</p> <p>Some borrowers may not be ready to resume payments</p> <p>Although some borrowers have seen their financial positions improve over the course of the pandemic, there are still some signs of distress and many may not be ready to resume their federal student loan payments, according to the Federal Reserve.</p> <p>"It is possible that some of these borrowers may not be ready to resume payments once forbearance expires," the Fed stated. "These borrowers hold almost \$400 billion in outstanding student loan debt and, prior to the pandemic, were required to pay about \$2.8 billion a month toward their student loan debt. This translates into a total of \$84 billion over the 30 months that the forbearance provision has been in effect."</p> <p>Risk scores improved over the past two years for all borrowers, but those that didn't make their payments tended to hold higher risk, according to data from Equifax. Borrowers who did not make payments averaged a risk score in the mid-600s whereas those who continued to make payments averaged above 700.</p> <p>About 8.8 million borrowers made at least one payment since August 2020 and are in a better position when forbearance ends, according to the Fed.</p> <p>Private student loan borrowers do not qualify for the payment pause, but they can reduce their monthly payments through a refinance. You can visit Credible to compare multiple student loan lenders at once and choose the one with the best interest rate for you.</p> <p>Biden administration weighs student debt cancellation</p> <p>While the Biden administration has not enacted widespread student debt cancellation, the White House previously said the president would announce his decision before the current federal student loan payment pause expires on August 31st.</p> <p>"I am in the process of taking a hard look at whether or not there will be additional debt forgiveness and I will have an answer on that in the next couple of weeks," Biden said last month.</p> <p>On the campaign trail, Biden talked about canceling \$10,000 worth of student loan debt per federal borrower. While he has since asked Congress to pass a bill for student loan forgiveness, he has also not ruled out doing so through executive action.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Stocks fall sharply amid fears of recession
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/16/business/stocks-bonds-markets.html
GIST	<p>On Wednesday, investors took comfort that the Federal Reserve would do whatever was necessary to bring inflation to heel, responding to the rallying cry of the Fed chair, Jerome H. Powell, by pushing stock prices up.</p> <p>A day later, reality sank in.</p>

Stocks tumbled on Thursday as investors came to terms with what the Fed's tougher stance meant for the economy: higher interest rates and the growing likelihood of a recession.

The S&P 500 closed down more than 3 percent, part of a global retreat that saw stocks in Europe also post sharp declines as central banks in other countries raised rates. With Thursday's decline, the S&P 500 is now almost 24 percent below its Jan. 3 peak, plunging deeper into the [bear market](#) that officially began on Monday.

If stocks continue to fall over the next two weeks, the three-month period that ends June 30 could ultimately be the index's worst quarter since 2008, when the collapse of Lehman Brothers set off the global financial crisis.

The plunge reflects a stark reality for corporations and their shareholders: The fastest inflation in four decades is sapping the buying power of consumers and driving up the cost of materials, transportation, labor and everything else that goes into running a business. But the Fed's efforts to fight it might, at least in the short term, prove even worse: By raising rates, the Fed hopes to cool demand enough to tamp down inflation — but the risk is that it does too much, tipping the economy into a recession.

"Inflation is not going to come down anytime soon, and it is going to take some kind of slowing of the economy for that to happen," said Jay Bryson, chief economist for Wells Fargo. "It's a really tricky situation."

Until this week, Mr. Bryson and his team were still betting that the United States could avoid a recession. But after yet another faster-than-expected inflation report on Friday, and the inevitability that the Fed would get more aggressive as a result, they capitulated: On Wednesday, moments after Mr. Powell finished speaking, Wells Fargo sent a note to clients predicting that a recession would start next year.

The Fed on Wednesday announced its [largest rate increase in decades](#). It was a forceful — if, in the view of some economists, belated — effort to rein in inflation that has proved more severe and more persistent than most forecasters predicted a year ago. Other central banks are following suit: The [Bank of England](#) announced on Thursday its fifth consecutive interest rate increase, and Switzerland's central bank [raised its interest rate](#) for the first time in 15 years, a more aggressive move than many expected.

Europe's Stoxx 600 index fell 2.5 percent, its seventh decline in eight days. The FTSE 100 in London dropped 3.1 percent. The S&P 500 fell 3.3 percent. The concern on Thursday was evident outside the stock market, too. Copper and oil prices, which historically serve as measures of sentiment about the global economy, traded lower.

Policymakers hope that by raising the cost of borrowing for consumers and businesses, they can reduce demand for goods and services and buy time for supply chains and labor markets that have been disrupted by the pandemic to return to normal.

But bringing down demand, inevitably, means causing economic pain. If consumers want fewer goods and services, businesses will have less revenue and will need fewer employees, meaning slower wage growth and, in all likelihood, more layoffs.

There are hints that the recovery, until now among the strongest on record, is losing momentum. The once red-hot housing market has cooled rapidly as [mortgage rates have risen](#). Fresh [government data](#) showed that builders in May broke ground on the fewest new homes in more than a year.

Average mortgage rates have nearly doubled this year, to about [5.8 percent on Thursday](#), from just over 3 percent. Consumers can [also expect to pay more](#) on credit card debt, car loans and certain student loans.

And retail sales fell in May for the first time this year as sky-high gas prices and rising borrowing costs ate into consumers' budgets. The bear market is likely to worsen consumers' dismal attitudes.

“Already, households have been squeezed by incredibly high inflation,” said Beth Ann Bovino, chief U.S. economist at S&P Global. “You just have to go to take your car to the gas station and feel the pain. That means that those high prices, both particularly with food and fuel, mean that a lot of people’s paychecks are going into essentials, very little is left to spend elsewhere. People are feeling the pain and are frustrated by it.”

Forecasters have steadily marked down their outlook for economic growth in the months ahead. IHS Markit on Thursday estimated that gross domestic product grew at an annual rate of just 0.8 percent in the current quarter; last week, they were calling for a 2.4 percent growth rate. A [forecasting tool](#) from the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta has an even more pessimistic prediction: 0.0 percent.

Such grim forecasts offer the possibility that the economy could end up shrinking this quarter for the second time in a row — a common, though unofficial, definition of a recession. The National Bureau of Economic Research, the country’s semiofficial arbiter of when business cycles begin and end, offers a [more nuanced definition](#) of a recession, calling it “a significant decline in economic activity that is spread across the economy and lasts more than a few months.” Most economists agree that, by that definition, a recession has not yet begun.

Mr. Powell on Wednesday argued, as he has in the past, that the Fed can bring down inflation without causing a recession, although he acknowledged that its ability to do so depends on factors that are outside its control, such as gas prices, the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. Many analysts are skeptical that such a “soft landing” is realistic. After Mr. Powell’s comments, economists at Deutsche Bank called such hopes “overly optimistic.”

Even if the Fed succeeds, however, that doesn’t guarantee a quick recovery for markets. Inflation is likely to come down only slowly. [Fed officials themselves](#) think it will remain elevated at least through the end of the year. The economy, however, could slow relatively quickly. Europe, which was experiencing slower growth even before Russia invaded Ukraine and has been hit even harder by the spike in energy prices, is particularly vulnerable to such a period of “stagflation” — a portmanteau of the words stagnation and inflation, used to describe periods of high unemployment and rising prices.

Analysts say the stock market isn’t likely to regain its footing until there are clear signs that inflation is starting to come under control, which in turn would take pressure off the Fed to raise rates quickly. Stocks briefly rallied in late May, ending a seven-week losing streak, as data seemed to show that gains in consumer prices had peaked. But the selling began again last week after a new report on the [Consumer Price Index](#) showed that inflation accelerated again, jumping 8.6 percent in May from a year earlier.

“Not until it is clear that the U.S. has seen peak inflation are concerns about the trajectory of Fed hikes likely to ease significantly,” Jane Foley, a strategist at Rabobank, wrote in an email. “Meanwhile, the market sentiment is likely to remain scarred.”

The last time the Fed had to raise rates rapidly to control inflation, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, it caused what was at the time the worst recession since the Great Depression. But economists are optimistic the pain this time won’t be nearly as severe, partly because inflation hasn’t yet become endemic.

Still, Mr. Bryson noted that recessions, once they begin, often prove hard to escape.

“Knock on wood you don’t have to go through the same depth of a recession that we did in ’81, ’82 to wring inflation out of the economy today,” he said. “The problem though is the stresses of an economic downturn often bring out imbalances that up until that time were largely undetected.”

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HEADLINE	06/16 Fears grow over Iran’s nuclear program
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/16/us/politics/iran-nuclear-program-tehran.html

WASHINGTON — Israeli and American intelligence officials have been watching each day as Iran digs a vast tunnel network just south of the Natanz nuclear production site, in what they believe is Tehran's biggest effort yet to construct new nuclear facilities so deep in the mountains that they can withstand bunker-busting bombs and cyberattacks.

Though the construction is [evident on satellite photographs and has been monitored by groups that track the proliferation of new nuclear facilities](#), Biden administration officials have never talked about it in public and Israel's defense minister has mentioned it just once, in a single sentence in a speech last month. In interviews with national security officials in both nations, there clearly were differing interpretations of exactly how the Iranians may intend to use the site, and even how urgent a threat it poses.

But as President Biden prepares for his first trip as president to the Middle East next month — one that will take him to Israel and Saudi Arabia, Iran's two biggest regional rivals — there is little debate that the conflict over Iran's nuclear program is about to flare again.

By most accounts, Iran is closer to being able to produce a bomb today than at any other point in the two-decade-long saga of its nuclear program — even if it is planning, as many national security officials believe, to stop just short of producing an actual weapon. On Mr. Biden's trip, the question of taking more extreme measures to stop Iran, as the United States and Israel have attempted before, will be high on the agenda.

The International Atomic Energy Agency said earlier this month that the country is just weeks away from being able to enrich enough bomb-grade fuel to make a single nuclear bomb — though fashioning that into a usable weapon could take at least another two years, even by the most alarmist Israeli estimates.

Gen. Kenneth F. McKenzie Jr., who retired recently as the head of U.S. Central Command, where he oversaw military planning for dealing with Iran, said Tehran, at least in the short term, was trying to leverage its nuclear capabilities as it negotiates with the United States.

"The Iranians' highest priority is using the nuclear threat to gain concessions, economic and otherwise," General McKenzie said.

But the facility could eventually prove critical to Iran if the Biden administration's efforts to revive the 2015 nuclear agreement continue to run into roadblocks. And for now, at least, efforts to reimpose limits on Iran's nuclear actions appear all but dead.

The deal, which President Donald J. Trump abandoned in 2018, limited Tehran's ability to install new centrifuges and forced it to ship 97 percent of its nuclear fuel out of the country. Mr. Biden's refusal of Iran's demand to remove the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps from the list of terrorist organizations, along with a flow of new revenue to Tehran resulting from today's soaring oil prices, have contributed to the stalemate in the talks.

Now, the Iranians are looking for new pressure points, including the excavation of the mountain plant near Natanz. And over the past week, Iranian authorities have switched off 27 cameras that gave inspectors a view into Iran's production of fuel.

The decision to cut off the cameras, which were installed as part of the nuclear deal, was particularly worrisome to Rafael Grossi, the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations agency responsible for nuclear inspections. If the cameras remain off for weeks, and it is impossible to track the whereabouts of nuclear materials, "I think this would be a fatal blow" to hopes of reviving the accord, Mr. Grossi said last week.

But this is far more than an inspection dispute. In the eyes of experts, Tehran is getting to the point of becoming what Robert Litwak, who has written extensively on the Iranian program at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, called a "[nuclear threshold state](#) whose uranium

enrichment program creates an inherent option — a hedge — to produce nuclear weapons,” without actually taking the last step.

“Iran’s move at Natanz,” he said of the plant now under construction, “amps up pressure on the United States to reach a new deal by highlighting the risk of a nuclear breakout should diplomacy fail.”

A Tunnel Complex Appears in a Mountainside

For decades, a barren piece of land near Natanz has been the centerpiece of Iran’s nuclear effort. The country has always insisted that its underground “pilot plant” there is working only to produce nuclear fuel for peaceful purposes — the production of nuclear energy. The evidence, some of it stolen by Israel from a warehouse in Tehran, suggests otherwise: that Iran has had plans in place for two decades to construct a bomb, if it concluded that it was in its interest.

Though the pilot plant is underground it is not deeply buried, making it an easy target for a bombing attack — a step Israel has come close to taking on many occasions. But the largest attack on the Natanz site came not from the air but from a combined U.S.-Israeli cyberoperation, code named “Olympic Games,” which forced the plant’s nuclear centrifuges, which rotate at supersonic speeds, to spin out of control. During the Bush and Obama administrations, it destroyed hundreds of centrifuges, and set Iran’s program back by a year or more. But it was no silver bullet.

To protect its future programs, Iran began building facilities deep underground. Its biggest success so far is a site called Fordow, built under a mountain on a base run by the Revolutionary Guards. It was [exposed in September of 2009](#), early in the Obama administration, when Iran, realizing that the cover had been blown on its project, hurriedly told the I.A.E.A. of its existence before Mr. Obama and France’s president at the time, Nicolas Sarkozy, could announce the finding.

The new facility is close to Natanz, but it resembles Fordow, which would require the largest bunker-busting bombs in the American inventory to attack. Israel does not yet possess those bunker-busters, or have a means to deliver them.

Biden administration officials say they have been following the construction of the new facility for more than a year, but are not especially alarmed. It is still several years from completion. And they suspect its immediate purpose is to [replace a centrifuge assembly facility that Israel blew up in April 2020](#), in a particularly sophisticated attack that made clear that the Iranian program had been penetrated by insiders, who apparently planted the explosives.

The Biden administration says there is plenty of time to deal with the new facility, through negotiations if possible and by force if necessary. The project is several years from completion, and may be just another form of pressure on American negotiators. Because it is still in a nascent phase, it plays no role in any effort to estimate how long it would take Iran to complete a weapon. Instead, it is viewed as a reminder from the Iranians that they will be ready to produce nuclear material on a vast scale, either in coming years or, if the nuclear deal is revived, by 2030, when the production limits negotiated in that agreement would largely expire.

To the Israelis, the tunnel complex is more evidence of a relentless Iranian effort to pursue a bomb capability — and, in the minds of many Israeli military and intelligence leaders, a justification for Israel’s accelerated attacks on the nuclear program and the scientists and engineers behind both Iran’s nuclear and missile programs.

Israel’s defense minister, Benny Gantz, took both American and Israeli government officials by surprise in mid-May when he decided to make Israel’s assessment public. “During these very days, Iran is making an effort to complete the production and installation of 1,000 advanced IR6 centrifuges at its nuclear facilities, including a new facility being built at an underground site near Natanz,” he said. The Iranians did not dispute the claim: they had announced, a year ago, that they would build new facilities in response to Israeli attacks.

In recent weeks, attacks and assassinations of Iranians in key military posts have picked up again, though the targets have been less well known than Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, believed to be the guiding intellect behind the Iranian nuclear weapons program, who was [killed in an automated ambush Israel conducted in late 2020](#).

Construction of the new facility, Israeli officials say, began about the same time. Their estimate is that the facility is very large — much larger than needed to replace the assembly facility that was destroyed two years ago.

Several Israeli officials say they believe Iran's ultimate objective is to use the facility to enrich uranium at a mass scale, using a family of advanced centrifuges that Iran has already started installing, on a test basis, at its older facility nearby. American officials concede the new facility is quite large, and usually well protected.

Still, the United States is not convinced Iran intends to use the facility to enrich uranium. That remains a possibility, given its size, but it is not a certainty, senior American officials said. What is more clear, these officials said, is Iran's intention to use the facility to construct centrifuges, rebuilding facilities the Israelis have destroyed in recent years.

On the Ground, Worrying Levels of Enrichment

To Biden administration officials, the more immediate problem is that Iran has successfully pushed ahead with its enrichment of uranium to achieve a level of 60 percent purity — far higher than anything they might need for civilian nuclear power plants. And in recent years they have seen a huge investment in missiles, drones and other weapons that are used against Saudi and Israeli targets, they say.

The 60 percent level of uranium enrichment is just short of what is needed to produce a weapon, and as Iran has amassed quantities of it over the past several months, the estimates of how long it would take to get fuel usable for a bomb have dwindled to weeks. Still, American officials also continue to believe that Iran has not taken steps to build an actual weapon — though Israeli officials express doubts.

All that said, former American officials said, Iran has the capability of building a nuclear weapon very quickly. More difficult would be miniaturizing such a device and putting it on a missile.

“They like the idea of hanging the nuclear program over us because it produces a response,” said General McKenzie, who on Wednesday was named executive director of the Global and National Security Institute at the University of South Florida. He said the real “crown jewels” for Iran are ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and drones.

“And that’s where they’ve made huge strides in the last five to seven years,” General McKenzie said, “where they now realistically have overmatch against their neighbors.”

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HEADLINE	06/16 Russia cuts parts of Europe off gas supply
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/16/world/europe/russia-gas-cuts-ukraine-germany.html
GIST	<p>BERLIN — As the leaders of Europe’s three biggest economies appeared in Kyiv on Thursday to send a message of support to Ukraine, President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia had his own message for them: Don’t forget, your industries are at my mercy.</p> <p>With inflation already near a 40-year high, gas prices surged further as Russia cut flows to Europe’s most important natural gas pipeline for the second day in a row on Thursday. Germany, Italy, Austria and the Czech Republic all reported shortfalls.</p> <p>Gazprom, Russia’s state-controlled gas giant, said repairs were to blame for the squeeze. But European officials openly accused Mr. Putin of using energy supplies as a weapon, burying any last shred of the notion that, on energy at least, Moscow was a reliable partner.</p>

Gas exports have given Moscow [a potent diplomatic tool](#) on the continent, where large swathes of industry depend on Russian energy. As Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany, President Emmanuel Macron of France and Prime Minister Mario Draghi of Italy [met with President Volodymyr Zelensky in Kyiv](#), Mr. Putin reminded them he has his finger on the gas tab — and the fate of European economies in his hand.

“We, Germany and other countries believe that these are lies,” Mr. Draghi told reporters at a news conference in Kyiv on Thursday when asked about the drop in gas flows and Gazprom’s stated repairs. He compared it to Russia’s blockade of other [Ukrainian exports](#): “In reality, there is a political use of gas, like there is a political use of grain.”

It’s not the first time Mr. Putin has strategically cut Europe’s gas supplies since the war started. Last month, Russia [suspended electricity exports and gas shipments to Finland](#) after the country abandoned its longstanding neutrality and formally requested NATO membership.

In April, Moscow [halted natural gas supplies to Poland and Bulgaria](#), two NATO countries that have been especially vocal in their opposition to Russia in the war.

Gas exports are vital for Russia’s economy, but the supply cuts, far from hurting Moscow, have increased prices so much that they have more than paid for themselves. Some Russian officials and gas executives have barely hidden their glee.

“Yes, we have a decrease in gas supplies to Europe by several tens of percent,” Alexei Miller, chief executive of Gazprom, [told the annual St. Petersburg International Economic Forum](#) on Thursday. “Except that prices rose not by tens of percent, but several fold. So I won’t bend the truth if I tell you that we bear no grudge.”

Russia’s deputy prime minister, Alexander Novak, speaking at the same conference, said Europeans were paying some 400 billion euros more than before the cuts, and hinted at more reductions to come.

“This is not the limit in our opinion,” Mr. Novak said. “Everything can be much more critical.”

With most Europeans not heating their homes during the summer, and air-conditioning relatively rare across the continent, the situation is tolerable for now. Officials in all four countries insisted that the drop did not represent an imminent threat.

But Europe’s dependency on Russian gas, built up over decades, is proving hard to roll back quickly. It took only weeks for the European Union to agree on a Russian coal embargo, and by last month countries had weaned themselves off Russian oil enough [to add that to the sanctions list](#).

Gas is another story.

In Germany, Europe’s largest economy and Russia’s most important gas client on the continent, one in two homes is heated with gas, and gas powers much of the country’s vaunted export industry. Germany’s powerful industrial lobby, the Federation of German Industry, said that companies were already switching to coal, making more natural gas available to refill storage tanks for the winter, but that the transition would take time.

“Since the start of the Russian war in Ukraine, German industry has been reducing its gas consumption in power generation as quickly as possible,” the group said.

Russia’s war on Ukraine set off an alarm for Germany, which for decades had bet that economic interdependence with Moscow would keep the peace in Europe — and that, even in moments of geopolitical tension, Russia could be trusted as a supplier of energy.

Until Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Berlin happily relied on Moscow for more than half of its gas imports, a third of its oil and half of its hard coal imports, ignoring warnings from the United States and other allies

about the leverage this gave Russia. Quitting that habit will not be easy in the short term without a shock to the German economy, which, like others in Europe, is still recovering from the pandemic.

The government is taking steps to make Germany independent from Russian coal by the end of summer, and from Russian oil by the end of the year. Already, the share of oil imports from Russia has fallen to 20 percent, and Russian coal imports have been halved.

Gas, on which Germany is banking as a bridge toward its goal of a carbon-neutral economy by 2045, has proved far harder to disentangle from the economy.

Robert Habeck, Germany's economy minister and vice chancellor, has said becoming independent from Russian energy would take at least two years. But this week he urged Germans to help accelerate the process by saving more energy.

"The time to do this has arrived," Mr. Habeck said in an appeal [posted to Instagram](#) on Wednesday. "Every kilowatt-hour helps in this situation."

"Putin is reducing the amount of gas. Not all in one go, but step by step," Mr. Habeck said. "That confirms what we have feared from the start."

Even as politicians sought to reassure Europeans, the head of Germany's federal agency for monitoring gas and power networks warned that if Gazprom continued to curtail flows, the situation could become more dangerous as temperatures drop.

Such concerns are shared elsewhere in Europe, where several countries depend on Russian gas arriving via Germany.

"Should Putin limit gas supplies to Germany in the longer term, it is practically certain the inflation in the Czech Republic will hit 20 percent by the end of the summer," Lukas Kovanda, chief economist at Trinity Bank, said on Twitter. "If he turns it off completely it might be well above that."

The Czech Republic's main gas provider, CEZ, reported that its supplies from Gazprom had been reduced to about 40 percent of its usual volume, Ladislav Kriz, a spokesman for the company, said on Thursday. The Czech minister of industry and trade, Jozef Sikela, said reserves could last until the end of October.

Austria's OMV energy company said that Gazprom had informed it of cuts, but declined to offer further details. Both the Czech Republic and Austria are among Europe's most vulnerable countries when it comes to Russian gas, relying on Moscow for almost all their natural gas supplies.

Italy, which imports 95 percent of its gas, buys 40 percent of that from Russia. Gazprom's supply to Italy fell 15 percent on Wednesday, and remained there on Thursday, the Italian energy company Eni said. The reduction was also linked to the reduced flows through the Nord Stream 1 pipeline connecting Russia to Germany, and the Russian energy company blamed necessary maintenance.

But European leaders did not buy the explanation. Roberto Cingolani, Italy's minister for ecological transition, linked the squeeze directly to the prime minister's trip.

"Today, Draghi is in Kyiv and this may be a small manifestation of retaliation," Mr. Cingolani said.

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HEADLINE	06/16 State Dept: 3rd American MIA in Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/16/world/europe/missing-american-ukraine.html
GIST	A third American who traveled to Ukraine to fight Russia's invasion may be missing in action, the State Department said on Thursday, a day after the families of two U.S. veterans fighting in Ukraine said the two men had disappeared together as their platoon came under fire earlier this month.

The possible third missing person was identified in recent weeks, a State Department spokesman, Ned Price, said in a briefing. “Unfortunately we don’t know the full details of that case,” he added.

The families of the two American veterans identified them on Wednesday as Alex Drueke and Andy Tai Ngoc Huynh, and expressed fears that they may have been captured by Russian forces.

As of Thursday afternoon, the United States had not been in contact with Russia about the two men, Mr. Price said, confirming [earlier comments](#) from a Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman that were reported by Russian state news.

“If we had credible reason to believe that these individuals were in Russian custody, we would pursue it,” he added, saying that State Department officials would reach out to Russia if they felt it would “be productive.”

The United States has discussed the issue with British partners and the International Committee of the Red Cross, Mr. Price said.

The men were members of a small team of international volunteers working for the Ukrainian intelligence service and had joined the team less than a day before going on the mission that ended in their captivity, said Chris Bowyer, a member of the unit who left Ukraine in late May after being wounded in combat but who has received regular updates from the remaining team in Kharkiv.

“It was supposed to be a reconnaissance mission,” Mr. Bowyer said. “They were briefed that the village was secure, that the Russians had been thrown out of it, and then they showed up in the middle of a Russian assault.”

The disappearance of volunteer fighters has underscored the peril facing thousands of people from across the world who have traveled to Ukraine to take up arms on behalf of Kyiv. The risk for foreign fighters was called into sharp relief last week after [two Britons and a Moroccan man](#) were convicted of being mercenaries and terrorists seeking to overthrow the government of the Donetsk People’s Republic and sentenced to death by a court in Russia-occupied eastern Ukraine.

International human rights experts, the U.S. State Department and British officials say the men are entitled to be treated as prisoners of war since they were part of Ukraine’s armed forces and are thus protected under the Geneva Conventions. But Maria Zakharova, the Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman, said on Friday that the Britons sentenced to death were not defined as combatants under international law and, as such, were not entitled to prisoner of war status.

If captured, Mr. Drueke, Mr. Huynh and the third person possibly missing would be the first Americans known to have become prisoners of war during the conflict.

Asked about the three men sentenced to death last week, Mr. Price reiterated the United States’ position that “anyone who is fighting with Ukraine’s armed forces should be treated as a prisoner of war,” regardless of whether Moscow considers them prisoners of war.

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HEADLINE	06/16 Seattle pension error costs retiree \$111,615
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/times-watchdog/due-to-seattle-pension-error-retired-couple-faces-111615-bill/
GIST	In the summer of 2020, Charles Sampson, a retired Seattle Police Department employee, received a letter with unwelcome news: The city had overpaid his pension benefits over five years, and he owed it \$111,615.68 .

Sampson, now 73, stared at the bold, six-figure sum in disbelief. “It was unreal to us, unreal,” said his wife, Mary Sampson. They hoped the city would drop the matter, but about a year later they received another letter, no less disconcerting than the first.

The city had already lowered Charles Sampson’s pension benefit to the correct sum, and now was cutting it by an additional 25% to recover the overpayment. That brought his monthly check to \$1,244, a 63% reduction from what he had been receiving. More ominously, the [letter states](#) that “if your benefit payments cease and any overpaid amount remains uncollected,” the city “may also seek recovery from you, your estate or your beneficiaries.”

Charles Sampson is one of six retired city employees or their beneficiaries who have received such notices, all stemming from a failure to adjust pension payments lower. Combined, the city paid these retirees roughly \$775,000 more than they should have received, according to records of the Seattle City Employees’ Retirement System (SCERS) — a daunting sum for individuals, although merely a drop in the \$3.95 billion pension fund.

The errors are a legacy of a time, as recently as 2018, when SCERS staffers manually logged pension data in spreadsheets to make a series of complicated benefit calculations. For instance, hundreds of retirees have selected an option that pays higher benefits until they begin collecting Social Security, at which point SCERS reduces their payment.

Adjusting these benefits requires monitoring a retiree’s age. In six cases, that didn’t happen, according to SCERS officials.

The overpayments only came to light with the introduction in 2019 of a \$15 million administration system that automates such calculations and flags mistakes.

“We acknowledge that we have some responsibility,” said Jeff Davis, SCERS’ executive director, blaming the manual process.

“But the fact is SCERS has legal obligations to make a reasonable effort to recover the funds owed,” said Paige Alderete, SCERS’ chief operating officer.

SCERS has recovered about a quarter of the overpayments, including two retirees who repaid the city in full, Alderete said. The pension fund is not seeking to recover interest on the overpayments and is allowing retirees to pay the money back over time by reducing their retirement benefits. The city will not take legal action to compel any outstanding sums from retirees’ estates, should they die, Davis said.

For some retirees, however, SCERS’ mistake still rankles.

“What really gets me is they waited nine years to let me know I’d been overpaid,” said Richard Jewett, a former Seattle City Light worker who retired in 2010. By then he [owed more than \\$165,000](#). “That is totally unacceptable,” he said.

Jewett, 77, thought about filing a lawsuit but let it go, preferring to spend his time working in his garden in the Skagit County town of Concrete, and with his grandkids. “Life’s more important to me than dealing with the city,” he said. “I’ve adjusted to what they’re giving me, though I really wish it wouldn’t have been that way.”

The Sampsons, though, still seethe at what they see as a matter of fairness. “I did my part, but you made an error,” Charles said of SCERS. Mary said the couple intentionally chose to receive the pension spread out over time. “I feel like our right to choose was taken away from us,” she said.

Charles Sampson has worked since he was 15 years old. He served in the Navy and later worked nearly 37 years as a community service officer for the Seattle Police Department, sorting non-law-enforcement

matters, from landlord-tenant disputes to homelessness. “We had a slogan,” he recalled. “If a CSO can’t help you, you can’t be helped.”

He and Mary, who retired as an administrative staff analyst, bought a tidy home in Renton with trimmed hedges and a view of Lake Washington. Their 53-year marriage has also had its share of health scares and struggles; Charles has had chronic heart problems, cancer and is dealing with memory difficulties, they said.

After retiring in 2009, Charles gave no thought to the calculation of his benefits — except that he was preoccupied with making sure that Mary would receive his pension if he died.

He asked SCERS to verify his benefits twice — in 2016, months after he became eligible for Social Security, and in 2019 — when the couple needed to verify their income to refinance their home. Each time, SCERS affirmed that the benefit payments were correct.

“When you’re reading stuff like this you’re believing them,” Mary Sampson said.

The letter notifying them of the overpayment came a year later. The Sampsons appealed, but SCERS determined that deducting 25% from Charles’ monthly check wouldn’t create an undue hardship on their finances.

Charles and Mary Sampson acknowledge that they have enough to cover their costs, though they’ve had to keep a close eye on bank balances before paying their bills and are considering terminating a life insurance policy whose premiums have become increasingly expensive.

Because SCERS is responsible for the payment error, they’d hoped it would waive 50% of their debt. Instead, they are paying back \$5,000 a year — a rate that would take 22 years to pay off, when the Sampsons would both be 95.

Even if they don’t end up having to repay it all, the obligation has weighed on them psychologically.

“It’s a debt we owe you now,” Mary Sampson said of SCERS. “It’s not good for us.”

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HEADLINE	06/16 Fully vaxxed but not boosted is not enough
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/being-fully-vaccinated-but-not-boosted-doesnt-help-against-omicron-study-finds/
GIST	<p>Two shots of COVID-19 vaccine without an additional booster offer essentially no lasting protection against infection with omicron, and a coronavirus infection is as effective as a recent booster shot in preventing a new omicron-fueled illness, researchers reported Wednesday.</p> <p>At the same time, any immunity to the highly contagious variant, either from infection or vaccination, appears to offer significant and lasting protection against serious illness, hospitalization and death, the researchers found. And if you haven’t had either the virus or the vaccine, doctors urged, it’s better to get the jab.</p> <p>The results, published in the New England Journal of Medicine, provide some of the best understanding to date on the longevity of different types of coronavirus immunity and offer insight into the future of the pandemic.</p> <p>“COVID-19 is going to stay with us essentially forever. It’s not really going to disappear. But the question will be: Will we be able to live with it somehow?” said Laith Jamal Abu-Raddad, an infectious disease epidemiologist at Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar and a co-author of the study. “And the initial results we are getting are actually very encouraging.”</p>

The study is the latest of several examining countrywide data from Qatar, the small Middle East nation with just under 3 million people.

Qatar's population is considerably younger than most developed countries' — just 9% of residents are older than 50, compared to about 35% in the U.S. It's also more diverse, given that 89% of its residents are expatriates from 150 other nations. The country also has a robust coronavirus testing program, a high COVID-19 vaccine uptake and a centralized public health database that provides researchers with clean, clear data to analyze the effects of the vaccines over time.

For this most recent study, researchers looked at data as the omicron subvariants known as BA.1 and BA.2 tore through the country's population from late December to late February.

They found that people who had received both shots of either the Comirnaty vaccine from Pfizer and BioNTech or the Spikevax shot from Moderna when they first became available but then neglected to shore up their immune systems with booster shots had essentially no protection against a mild to moderate case of COVID-19. Six months after their last shot, they were just as susceptible to a positive test and disease symptoms as anyone else — but still showed strong resistance to severe illness.

A prior infection was about 46% effective at preventing a symptomatic infection. Being [fully vaccinated and boosted](#) was about 52% effective. And having natural immunity from a prior infection as well as immunity from a vaccine and booster was the most effective of all, reducing COVID-19 risk by 77%.

Those figures represent a steep decline from the vaccines' early days, when clinical trials showed they were 94% to 95% effective at preventing even mild illnesses. But as the coronavirus accumulates mutations, the vaccines become less effective at recognizing the virus and blocking infections.

"The immune evasion is so much higher" with omicron, Abu-Raddad said. It is "essentially a new virus."

The passage of time since the last boost of immunity from either an infection or a shot also erodes the body's resistance to the kind of infection that elicits noticeable symptoms and a second pink line on a home test.

"However," Raddad said, "and I think this is really the important part: The immunity against severe COVID-19 was really very much preserved."

It may sound like a past infection is just as useful as a vaccine at countering Omicron, but doctors have an unambiguous preference: Get the shot, not the virus.

"It's definitely much, much safer to get vaccinated than to get infected," said [Dr. Jeffrey Klausner](#), an infectious disease specialist at USC's Keck School of Medicine.

"The vaccine is only presenting a small piece of the virus," Klausner said. "The whole virus, if you get infected, is going to spread throughout the body, it's going to cause different symptoms in different body parts and increase your risk for long COVID or a prolonged duration of illness."

[Previous studies](#) have documented omicron's [galling ability](#) to evade existing vaccine antibodies.

The data from the Qatar group adds to that work by shedding light on the longevity of immunity, said [Dr. Robert "Chip" Schooley](#), an infectious disease specialist at UC San Diego. "They've done a much better job of understanding the decay of the immune response over time than we have" in the U.S., he said.

"Getting COVID right now — if you're vaccinated up and you're reasonably healthy — is more of a nuisance than it is a life-threatening event for most people," Schooley said. "It's a very different disease from two years ago, when we had a largely non-immune human population, and a virus that was going at you for the first time."

	“Now we have a virus that many of us have either seen through vaccination, or through infection, or a combination of both,” he added. “The playing field is much more level.”
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HEADLINE	06/16 Oregon: first probable monkeypox case
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/oregon-reports-first-probable-case-of-monkeypox/
GIST	<p>SALEM, Ore. (AP) — Oregon health officials have reported the first probable case of monkeypox in the state.</p> <p>The Oregon Health Authority said in a statement Thursday the case was in an adult male who had travelled to a community with confirmed cases. He remains isolated and is following recommendations from public health officials and medical providers, authorities said. Testing to confirm the case is being done by federal officials.</p> <p>The OHA is working to identify individuals at potential risk for exposure. No other details were available.</p> <p>Monkeypox is endemic in parts of Africa, where people have been infected through bites from rodents or small animals. It does not usually spread easily among people.</p> <p>But recently cases began emerging in Europe and the United States. Many — but not all — of those who contracted the virus had traveled internationally, and health officials in a growing number of countries are investigating.</p> <p>The illness typically begins with flu-like symptoms and swelling of the lymph nodes, followed by a rash on the face and body.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Shanghai to mass-test entire city weekly
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/world/shanghai-to-mass-test-whole-city-weekly-to-keep-covid-at-bay/
GIST	<p>Bloomberg News - Shanghai, which reported just 16 COVID-19 cases for Wednesday, will conduct mass-testing drives every weekend until the end of July in the latest display of the lengths authorities are going to in order to maintain a zero-tolerance approach to the virus that’s disrupting its economy and leaving it isolated.</p> <p>A temporary lockdown will also be imposed on residential complexes where a COVID case is detected in the week leading up to the weekend testing, Zhao Dandan, an official with the Shanghai Municipal Health Commission, said at a briefing Wednesday. The lockdown will be lifted once everyone in the compound has been tested, he said.</p> <p>In an effort to detect cases early and break transmission chains, the city’s residents will need to take nucleic acid tests at least once a week until the end of July, with workers at supermarkets, barbers, drugstores, shopping malls and restaurants required to undergo daily testing. Delivery workers need to take both a nucleic acid and rapid antigen tests every day. Staff at banks, gas companies and industrial entities should also do an antigen test every day.</p> <p>The latest policy measure in China’s financial hub, which emerged from a bruising two-month lockdown earlier this month, shows the government’s increasing reliance on frequent mass testing to stick to its COVID Zero stance in the face of the hyper-infectious omicron variant. Tens of thousands of lab testing booths are being set up across large cities to allow frequent swabbing to help uncover infection chains early and avert economically-crushing lockdowns. The country reported just 80 local cases nationwide on Wednesday.</p> <p>Officials are betting the cost of testing and the small-scale disruption to daily life — tests can take just minutes — will be far less than the hit of shutting down cities. Shanghai’s lockdown came after a sluggish</p>

initial response to its outbreak and roiled global supply chains as companies like Tesla halted or delayed production for weeks.

But for residents, frequent mass testing means living with the constant threat of being ensnared in a building-specific lockdown should even one positive case be detected. That's likely to further weigh on consumer spending and risks putting the government's full-year economic growth target of around 5.5% further out of reach.

It will be more difficult for the service industry to stage a comeback, as "the amount of time that people could've spent on consumption — especially on weekends — is now all wasted on queuing," said Ding Shuang, chief economist for Greater China and North Asia at Standard Chartered Plc.

While neither frequent testing nor lockdowns are ideal, weekly tests to snuff out cases are still "much better" as it can help Shanghai avert the kind of curbs imposed in April and May and smooth production for manufacturers, he said.

With mass testing becoming more frequent, China last month ordered all provinces to lower their test prices by June 10. Shanghai pays 3.5 yuan (52 cents) per person for PCR mass testing, meaning the city may spend as much as 613 million yuan for all of its 25 million residents to go through the planned regimen of weekly tests through the end of July.

The testing plan underscores China's divergence from the rest of the world, which is largely living with the virus, and shows authorities' unease with COVID's intractable community spread despite repeated testing and harsh restrictions. Shanghai reported two new cases outside of government quarantine facilities on Wednesday and sent scores of close contacts to isolate to prevent further spread.

Staunch testing advocate Michael Mina, a former Harvard epidemiologist who was an early proponent of using inexpensive at-home tests to screen populations, says China's system is going too far. While the approach could temporarily wipe out the virus in the country, it also means the population is cut off from the pathogen, making them more vulnerable once they are exposed, he said.

Beijing has also seen another virus cluster emerging from a bar just days after the virus' community spread was declared to have been curbed. The bar cluster has led to more than 200 cases and triggered fresh rounds of mass testing in parts of the city.

The capital reported 18 cases for Wednesday, down from 63 on Tuesday. It announced 13 local cases up to 3 p.m. on Thursday, with all infections detected in quarantine. Officials said they will test some groups more frequently, including deliverymen and employees of schools and hospitals.

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HEADLINE	06/16 Australia to cut greenhouse emissions 43%
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/australia-commits-to-reducing-greenhouse-emissions-by-43/
GIST	<p>CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Australia's new government on Thursday formally committed to a more ambitious greenhouse gas reduction target of 43% by the end of the decade in fulfillment of a key election pledge.</p> <p>The previous conservative government was dumped by voters at the May 21 election after it stuck to a seven-year-old pledge to reduce Australia's emissions by only 26% to 28% below 2005 levels by 2030.</p> <p>Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said he had written to U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change executive secretary Patricia Espinosa Cantellano to inform her of Australia's new 2030 target.</p> <p>Albanese said legislation to enshrine the new target in law would be introduced to the new Parliament which will sit for the first time on July 26. However the target did not depend on Parliament's approval.</p>

Investment in Australia's energy sector had been held up during the previous government's nine years in power due to the administration's failure to agree on a climate policy, Albanese said.

"What businesses have been crying out for is investment certainty," Albanese said. "The certainty that they need to invest over a longer time frame than the political cycle of three years."

Australia is one of the world's largest exporters of coal and liquified natural gas which makes reducing dependence on fossil fuels a politically vexed issue. The previous government was widely considered a laggard among wealthy countries in combating climate change.

The United States has committed to reductions of between 50% and 52% below 2005 levels by 2030. Britain has pledged to cut emissions by 68% below 1990 levels.

Albanese's government could face pressure in a new, greener Parliament to adopt an even more ambitious target.

Several seats have yet to be declared as counting continues following the election.

The center-left Labor Party administration will likely hold a narrow majority of 77 seats in the 151-seat House of Representatives where a majority of lawmakers is needed to form government.

A record 16 lawmakers in the House will not be aligned with either the government or opposition.

The minor Greens party is on track to secure four seats, up from a single lawmaker in the last Parliament. The Greens want a 2030 reduction target of 75%. Newly elected independent lawmakers have called for a 60% target or at least 50%.

Greens senators could hold a balance of power in the upper chamber where major parties rarely hold a majority and need support from outside government to pass laws.

The 2030 commitment comes as much of Australia's population faces soaring electricity and gas prices due in part to the Russia-Ukraine war.

Large parts of southeast Australia face the threat of blackouts for a range of reasons including an unusually cold start to the Southern Hemisphere winter and unscheduled outages of aging coal-fired generators that will be shut down within years and are not being adequately maintained.

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HEADLINE	06/16 King Co. 2nd probable monkeypox case
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/second-probable-case-monkeypox-detected-king-county/2TOU255HFNBNDMQG6CBUOZJL2E/
GIST	<p>KING COUNTY, Wash. — Public Health – Seattle & King County announced Thursday that a second probable case of monkeypox has been identified in King County.</p> <p>The virus was found in a man who has traveled internationally in the past month to a country that has also reported monkeypox cases.</p> <p>Health officials said the man is isolating at home.</p> <p>No high-risk exposures have been identified in the county, but health officials are following up with those who had potential low or intermediate risk exposures.</p> <p>While initial testing at the Washington State Public Health Laboratory on Wednesday confirmed the orthopoxviral infection, which is likely monkeypox, officials said official confirmation must come from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p>

	<p>The first case in the county was reported in May and later confirmed by the CDC.</p> <p>That case was found in a man who had also traveled internationally to a country that reported monkeypox cases.</p> <p>Health officials have said, “People should understand that the disease can affect anyone and those who are most at risk are those who have had close physical contact with someone with monkeypox. The risk is not limited to men who have sex with men.</p> <p>“Anyone who has symptoms of monkeypox, or has been in close contact with someone with monkeypox, should be evaluated by a healthcare provider. This is especially important for those who have also traveled in the last 30 days to a region reporting monkeypox cases, or who is a man who has sex with other men.”</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Homeless camp outside apartment windows
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/capitol-hill-apartment-residents-say-city-clearing-nearby-camp
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Residents in Capitol Hill are seeing some improvement with a homeless encampment that’s been causing trouble right outside their windows for weeks, but there’s still a long way to go before the area is cleared out.</p> <p>Several occupants of the Bonneville Apartments on E. Denny Way said they feel helpless and unsafe with the encampment nearby, which has brought fights, open drug use and vandalism right outside their windows.</p> <p>They were excited to see some improvement with crews clearing out trash Thursday morning, but some of the tents still remain.</p> <p>I was "really excited," resident Lance Brooke said Thursday. “It’s not all done but at least something’s being done.”</p> <p>Brooke woke up to crews clearing out trash and tents from the homeless encampment that popped up outside his window just a couple weeks ago.</p> <p>“There were these guys and they were loading up a truck with a bunch of the stuff there and two of the tents were already gone,” Brooke said, “The area’s tidied up.”</p> <p>Residents say a flatbed truck carried away mounds of trash and a few of the unoccupied tents that used to be in this area, but several tents still remain.</p> <p>“I still sleep with pepper spray, I still need my family to check on my occasionally,” said Olha Sheverieva, who also lives in the apartment complex. “I still ask my friends to stay with them when it gets especially bad.”</p> <p>Businesses nearby said they along with residents have been reporting the encampment to the city constantly and encouraging their customers to do the same.</p> <p>Residents told KOMO News that since Monday city officials said they had inspected the location and are considering next steps, but residents want this area cleared.</p> <p>“It needs to go, we cannot live like this at this point,” Sheverieva said. “This is not exactly the cheapest apartment in Seattle, it’s right in the heart of Capitol Hill.”</p>

	<p>City officials are still looking into the status of this encampment and if it is scheduled to be cleared, but people who work nearby said they were told it would be cleared this week.</p> <p>The city also shared earlier this week they have cleared several other encampments this week, including one at Jackson Golf Course.</p> <p>"It just moves," said Robert Johnson, who frequents the area. "What's here right now was just somewhere else just a couple days ago. It was someone else's problem a few days ago."</p> <p>So far this year, city officials said outreach efforts have resulted in over 660 referrals to shelter.</p> <p>The majority of those referrals have been to tiny houses or enhanced shelter beds with case workers that help with permanent housing.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Leaders pledge arms, EU path for Ukraine
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/eu-leaders-visit-ukraine-515075496ed9d6cfe3e4acde23b52f8e
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The leaders of four European Union nations visited Ukraine on Thursday, vowing to back Kyiv's bid to become an official candidate to join the bloc in a high-profile show of support for the country fending off a Russian invasion.</p> <p>French President Emmanuel Macron also promised Ukraine six more powerful truck-mounted artillery guns, the latest in a new round of Western arms pledges for Ukraine as the war grinds on in the eastern Donbas region.</p> <p>The leaders "are doing everything so that Ukraine alone can decide its fate," Macron said at a news conference.</p> <p>In the face of Kyiv's fears that Western resolve to help it could wane, the visit by Macron and the leaders of Germany, Italy and Romania carried heavy symbolic weight. The three Western European powers have faced criticism for continuing to engage with Russian President Vladimir Putin — and failing to provide Ukraine with the scale of weaponry that it has said is necessary to fend off the Russians. Romania's president also made the journey.</p> <p>After arriving in Kyiv to the sound of air raid sirens, the leaders headed to Irpin, a suburb of the capital that was the scene of intense fighting early in the war and where many civilians were killed. They decried the destruction there.</p> <p>While shocking images of such devastation have rallied Western support, officials in Ukraine have expressed fears that "war fatigue" could eventually erode that — particularly as rising prices and upcoming elections in the United States are increasingly dominating people's concerns.</p> <p>The U.S. and its European allies have given billions of dollars in weaponry to Ukraine, and Germany and the U.S. recently announced new arms shipments. Such arms have been key to the country's surprising success in preventing the Russians from taking the capital, but officials in Kyiv have said much more will be needed if they are to drive Moscow's forces out.</p> <p>Many in Ukraine hoped that the leaders' visit could mark a turning point by opening the way to significant new arms supplies and it also comes as EU leaders prepare to make a decision next week on Ukraine's request to become a candidate for membership in the bloc.</p> <p>European allies have sent increasingly muscular weapons and rallied around Ukraine more than many expected, approving wave after wave of unprecedented sanctions against Russia that are badly squeezing Europe's economy.</p>

But Ukrainians say more is still needed as Russian forces pressing their offensive in the eastern Donbas region, slowly but steadily gaining ground on the badly outmanned and outgunned Ukrainian forces.

While hopes were high for the visit, there was also skepticism.

Gov. Serhiy Haidai of Luhansk, which is also part of the Donbas, said the visit would not yield progress if the leaders ask Ukraine to sign a peace treaty with Russia that involves giving up territory.

“I am sure that our president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, is not going to make concessions and trade our territories. If someone wants to stop Russia by giving them territories, Germany has Bavaria, Italy has Tuscany, the French can concede Provence, for instance,” he said.

“Today it will be one territory, tomorrow another one, the day after tomorrow another,” he said.

While visiting Irpin, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz observed that officials must keep the horrible scenes destruction in mind in all their decisions.

“Innocent civilians have been hit, houses have been destroyed; a whole town has been destroyed in which there was no military infrastructure at all,” Scholz said. “And that says a great deal about the brutality of the Russian war of aggression, which is simply out for destruction and conquest. We must bear that in mind in everything that we decide.”

Italian Premier Mario Draghi said during the tour of Irpin that Ukraine’s backers will rebuild “everything” with European help.

“They destroyed the nurseries, the playgrounds, and everything will be rebuilt,” Draghi said.

Macron, Scholz and Draghi, representing the three largest economies in the European Union, traveled to Kyiv together on a special overnight train provided by the Ukrainian authorities. They have been criticized for not visiting Kyiv sooner. A number of other European leaders have already made the long trip overland to show solidarity with a nation under attack, even in times when the fighting raged closer to the capital than it does now.

President Klaus Iohannis of Romania — which borders Ukraine and has been a key destination for Ukrainian refugees — arrived on a separate train.

After viewing Irpin, he wrote on Twitter that there are “no words to describe the unimaginable human tragedy and horrible destruction” and called for “all Russian perpetrators to be held responsible by the international criminal justice” system.

Several air raid sirens rang out while the European leaders were in their hotel preparing for the rest of their visit, and Kyiv authorities urged people to seek shelter. Such alerts are a frequent occurrence.

In Ukraine, Macron responded to criticism of France’s response, including his recent comment that Russia shouldn’t be “humiliated,” which deeply angered Ukrainians. He insisted that “France has been at Ukraine’s side since the first day.”

His office also released a list of the dates of all his conversations with Zelenskyy. They have spoken by phone on 23 occasions since the war began; and Macron spoke with Putin 11 times, including three times with Scholz.

Scholz had long resisted traveling to Kyiv, saying he didn’t want to “join the queue of people who do a quick in-out for a photo opportunity.” Instead, Scholz said a trip should focus on doing “concrete things.”

Germany on Wednesday announced that it will provide Ukraine with three multiple launch rocket systems of the kind that Kyiv has said it urgently needs.

	<p>Tamara Malko, a resident of the Donetsk region that is part of the Donbas, said Macron and Scholz had been “very cold” toward Ukrainians so far, and hoped for a change.</p> <p>“We want peace very much ... and have high hopes for Macron and Scholz,” she said. “We want them to see and understand our pain.”</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Yellowstone floods thru eastern Montana
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/floods-science-travel-climate-and-environment-853633990245521cc13a7638dcd15e58
GIST	<p>BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — Montana’s largest city restarted its water plant Thursday after shutting it down amid record flooding that’s caused widespread damage in Yellowstone National Park and surrounding communities.</p> <p>Residents in ravaged areas, meanwhile, cleaned up from the mess and braced for the economic fallout while the park remains closed at the height of tourist season.</p> <p>The city of Billings had asked residents to conserve water because it was down to a limited supply when the Yellowstone River hit record high levels and triggered the closure of the treatment plant.</p> <p>“We are aware yesterday’s alert to the community caused a panic. That was never our hope,” city officials said in a statement Thursday. “We have never witnessed a situation like the one we saw yesterday ... we did not know how bad it could get or how long it would continue.”</p> <p>The floodwaters continued to move downstream. By Friday morning the flooding was expected to reach Miles City in eastern Montana. Local authorities said low-lying areas along the river could be flooded but there was no immediate risk to the city of more than 8,000 people.</p> <p>Officials had asked Billings residents Wednesday to conserve water because it was down to a 24- to 36-hour supply after a combination of heavy rain and rapidly melting mountain snow raised the Yellowstone River to historic levels that forced them to shut down its water treatment plant.</p> <p>“None of us planned a 500-year flood event on the Yellowstone when we designed these facilities,” said Debi Meling, the city’s public works director.</p> <p>The city of 110,000 stopped watering parks and boulevards, and its fire department filled its trucks with river water.</p> <p>Normal operations resumed Thursday after the river level began to drop. It crested Wednesday at more than foot above the previous recorded high in Billings in 1997.</p> <p>The unprecedented and sudden flooding earlier this week drove all but a dozen of the more than 10,000 visitors out of the nation’s oldest park.</p> <p>Remarkably no one was reported hurt or killed by raging waters that pulled homes off their foundations and pushed a river off course — possibly permanently — and may require damaged roads to be rebuilt a safer distance away.</p> <p>On Wednesday, residents in Red Lodge, Montana, a gateway town to the park’s northern end, used shovels, wheelbarrows and a pump to clear thick mud and debris from a flooded home along the banks of Rock Creek.</p>

“We thought we had it, and then a bridge went out. And it diverted the creek, and the water started rolling in the back, broke out a basement window and started filling up my basement,” Pat Ruzich said. “And then I quit. It was like, the water won.”

While the Yellowstone flood is rare, it is the type of event that is becoming more common as the planet warms, experts said.

“We certainly know that climate change is causing more natural disasters, more fires, bigger fires and more floods and bigger floods,” said Robert Manning, a retired University of Vermont professor of environment and natural resources, “These things are going to happen, and they’re going to happen probably a lot more intensely.”

Yellowstone officials are hopeful that next week they can reopen the southern half of the park, which includes Old Faithful geyser. Park officials say the northern half of the park is likely to remain closed all summer, a devastating blow to the local economies that rely on tourism.

Closure of the northern part of the park will keep visitors from features that include Tower Fall, Mammoth Hot Springs and the Lamar Valley, which is known for viewing wildlife such as bears and wolves.

The rains hit just as area hotels filled up in recent weeks with summer tourists. More than 4 million visitors were tallied by the park last year. The wave of tourists doesn’t abate until fall, and June is typically one of Yellowstone’s busiest months.

Montana Gov. Greg Gianforte, a Republican, has faced criticism from Democrats and members of the public for being out of the country during the historical flooding.

“Before flooding began in south-central Montana, Governor Gianforte left the country late last week on a long-scheduled personal trip with the first lady,” the governor’s spokesperson Brooke Stroyke said in a statement Wednesday. “He is returning early and as quickly as possible.”

The statement did not say where the governor was. Montana’s Lt. Gov. Kristen Juras signed an emergency disaster declaration on Tuesday and she was meeting with FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell and state disaster and emergency services personnel in Red Lodge on Thursday.

The tourism season had started well for Cara McGary who guides groups through the Lamar Valley to see wolves, bison, elk and bears. She’d seen more 20 grizzlies some days this year.

Now, with the road from Gardiner into northern Yellowstone washed out, the wildlife is still there but it’s out of reach to McGary and her guide service, In Our Nature, is suddenly in trouble.

“The summer that we prepared for is not at all similar to the summer that we’re going to have,” she said. “This is an 80% to 100% loss of business during the high season.”

Flying Pig Adventures, a Gardiner-based business that guides rafting trips on the Yellowstone River, will need to rely more on tourists staying in Montana now that roads into the park are impassible, co-owner Patrick Sipp said Wednesday.

It’s a blow not unlike how COVID-19 temporarily shut down Yellowstone two years ago, reducing the park’s June 2020 tourist visits by about one-third before they rebounded over the rest of that summer.

“We’re definitely a resilient company, we’ve got a very tough crew,” Sipp said. “But it’s devastating. You just hate seeing stuff like that in the community. We’re just hoping that we can get back out there relatively soon.”

Meantime, as the waters recede, parks officials are turning their attention to the massive effort of rebuilding many miles of ruined roads and, possibly, hundreds of washed-out bridges, many of them built

	<p>for backcountry hikers. Yellowstone Superintendent Cam Sholly said assessment teams won't be able to tally the damage until next week.</p> <p>Kelly Goonan, an associate professor at Southern Utah University and an expert in national parks and recreation management, said rebuilding will be a long process.</p> <p>"This is something we're definitely going to feel the impacts of for the next several years," Goonan said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Swiss raise interest rate amid inflation fears
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/politics-swiss-franc-currency-markets-4ce1a5716c0759dd5e1e6112fef691cb
GIST	<p>GENEVA (AP) — Switzerland's central bank announced a one-quarter of a percentage point increase to a key interest rate Thursday, the first increase in nearly 15 years. It indicated the move was an attempt to ward off inflationary pressures as food and fuel prices rise worldwide.</p> <p>The Swiss National Bank said the rate hike would take effect Friday. The Swiss franc, which is generally considered a stable currency, jumped against the euro and the U.S. dollar in currency markets after the announcement.</p> <p>The bank said the rate on sight deposits would be increased by a quarter-point, to negative 0.25%. Swiss interest rates have been negative for months, indicating that inflation had not been a worry of monetary policymakers in the rich Alpine country.</p> <p>The Swiss central bank last changed interest rates in January 2015, but the last increase was in September 2007, it said.</p> <p>The bank said it "cannot rule out" that other rate hikes might be necessary in the future. Annualized inflation came in at 2.9 percent for Switzerland in May, it said.</p> <p>Global economic growth has slowed "markedly" in recent months, the bank said, in part due to inflation that has weighed on consumers' pocketbooks, fallout from Russia's war in Ukraine, and coronavirus lockdowns in China. Supply bottlenecks have increased the prices of some goods, it said.</p> <p>The bank said it "assumes that energy prices will remain high for the time being, but that there will not be an acute energy shortage in the major economic areas."</p> <p>"The positive development of the economy should thus continue overall," the national bank said in a statement.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Protests: new India military recruiting path
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/india/protests-break-out-india-over-new-military-recruitment-system-2022-06-16/
GIST	<p>LUCKNOW, India, June 16 (Reuters) - Police in northern India fired shots in the air on Thursday to push back stone-throwing crowds and authorities shut off mobile internet in at least one district to forestall further chaos, as protests widened against a new military recruitment system.</p> <p>Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government this week announced an overhaul of recruitment for India's 1.38 million-strong armed forces, looking to bring down the average age of personnel and reduce pension expenditure.</p> <p>But potential recruits, military veterans, opposition leaders and even some members of Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have raised reservations over the revamped process.</p>

In northern Haryana state's Palwal district, some 50 km (31 miles) south of the capital New Delhi, crowds hurled stones at a government official's house and police protecting the building fired shots to keep the mob at bay, according to video footage from Reuters partner ANI.

"Yes, we have fired a few shots to control the crowd," a local police official said, declining to be named.

There was no immediate information on casualties.

Mobile internet was temporarily suspended in Palwal district for the next 24 hours, Haryana's information department said.

Protesters in eastern India's Bihar state set a BJP office on fire in Nawada city, attacked railway infrastructure and blocked roads, as demonstrations spread across several parts of the country, police officials told Reuters.

Protesters also attacked railway property across Bihar, setting alight coaches in at least two locations, damaging train tracks and vandalising a station, according to officials and a railways statement.

The new recruitment system, called Agnipath or "path of fire" in Hindi, will bring in men and women between the ages of 17-and-a-half and 21 for a four-year tenure at non-officer ranks, with only a quarter retained for longer periods.

Previously, soldiers have been recruited by the army, navy and air force separately and typically enter service for up to 17 years for the lowest ranks.

The shorter tenure has caused concern among potential recruits.

"Where will we go after working for only four years?" one young man, surrounded by fellow protesters in Bihar's Jehanabad district, told ANI. "We will be homeless after four years of service. So we have jammed the roads."

Smoke billowed from burning tyres at a crossroads in Jehanabad where protesters shouted slogans and performed push-ups to emphasise their fitness for service.

Bihar and neighbouring Uttar Pradesh saw protests over the recruitment process for railway jobs in January this year, underlining India's persistent unemployment problem.

Varun Gandhi, a BJP lawmaker from Uttar Pradesh, in a letter to India's defence minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said that 75% of those recruited under the scheme would become unemployed after four years of service.

"Every year, this number will increase," Gandhi said, according to a copy of the letter posted by him on social media.

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HEADLINE	06/16 Border arrests record high in May
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/immigration/2022/06/16/united-states-border-immigration-arrests/
GIST	<p>Immigration arrests along the U.S. southern border rose in May to the highest levels ever recorded, as growing numbers of migrants arrived from Turkey, India, Russia and other nations outside the Western Hemisphere, the latest U.S. Customs and Border Protection figures show.</p> <p>CBP made 239,416 arrests along the Mexico border last month, a 2 percent increase from April, according to the totals. The agency is on pace to exceed 2 million detentions during fiscal 2022, which ends in September, after tallying a record 1.73 million in 2021.</p>

May is typically a busy month for illegal border crossings, but the [latest figures](#) indicate a diversifying migration wave that presents a significant logistical and political challenge for the Biden administration.

Many migrants seeking to reach the United States fly to Mexico. Last month the number of border crossers from India arrested by CBP jumped to 2,438, up 55 percent from April, the latest figures show. Authorities encountered 2,310 border crossers from Turkey, up 51 percent. The number of Russians increased 102 percent, to 3,394.

In a statement released late Wednesday, CBP Commissioner Chris Magnus warned migrants of the dangers posed by illegal crossings.

“As temperatures start to rise in the summer, human smugglers will continue to exploit vulnerable populations and recklessly endanger the lives of migrants for financial gain,” he said. “The terrain along the Southwest Border is extreme, the summer heat is severe, and the miles of desert that migrants must hike after crossing the border are unforgiving.”

Many of the migrants arriving from outside the Western Hemisphere are not sneaking through the desert, however. After landing in Mexico and traveling to the U.S. border, they typically cross the Rio Grande or walk through gaps in the U.S. barriers, then surrender to U.S. agents and request humanitarian protection, adding to a court backlog of about 400,000 pending asylum cases.

CBP figures show border crossers from Mexico, Central America, Cuba and Haiti also continued to arrive in high numbers in May. Authorities detained 19,040 migrants from Colombia, up 45 percent from April, an ally nation the Biden administration describes as one of its most important partners for a regional approach to migration management.

For comparison, authorities detained just 408 Colombians during the same period a year ago, in May 2021.

The composition of Central American migration is also shifting, the May data shows. Authorities also stopped 18,944 Nicaraguans last month, a record, and more than twice the number of migrants from El Salvador who were taken into custody.

President Biden’s Republican opponents are campaigning on border security ahead of the November midterm elections, and polls show the administration receives poor ratings on the issue.

Biden campaigned for office promising to reverse many of the Trump administration’s border-control measures and establish a system that would be orderly and humane. Instead the administration has struggled to cope with ever-growing numbers of illegal entries and federal court rulings that have halted Biden’s attempts to modify the U.S. immigration system.

Of the 239,416 arrests, 222,656 were made by the Border Patrol between official ports of entry, topping the 220,063 arrests recorded in March 2000 that were the previous all-time high, [statistics show](#).

Biden’s attempt to lift the pandemic-era border restrictions known as [Title 42](#) was enjoined in federal court last month, but the latest figures indicate the administration applied the policy to fewer than half the migrants taken into government custody in May.

The Title 42 measures allow CBP to quickly deport border crossers or return them to Mexico without giving them a chance to seek protection under U.S. asylum laws. The provisions require the cooperation of Mexican authorities, who generally do not accept returns of migrants who are not from Mexico or Central America.

The Biden administration says the rapid-return policy has inflated CBP enforcement figures because migrants returned to Mexico under Title 42 do not face the threat of U.S. prosecution, and typically attempt to cross again until they’re successful.

In May, 25 percent of the migrants arrested by CBP had at least one immigration arrest during the previous 12 months, the agency said, compared with an average re-encounter rate of 15 percent during the 2014-to-2019 period.

Biden officials say the economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic and instability around the world have put migrants on the move.

Last week at the Summit of the Americas held in Los Angeles, the United States and other nations in the hemisphere signed the “Los Angeles Declaration,” affirming a regional commitment to protecting vulnerable populations while improving border controls and immigration cooperation.

“We acknowledge that addressing irregular international migration requires a regional approach, and that ongoing health, social, and economic challenges of the pandemic exacerbate the root causes driving irregular migration, including the vulnerabilities of many migrants and their communities,” the [declaration](#) stated.

Biden has tasked Vice President Harris with leading the administration’s [Root Causes Strategy](#), with billions of dollars in new investments for Central America’s Northern Triangle region of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

The leaders of those countries skipped the Los Angeles summit, however, and the latest CBP figures show those three nations accounted for only 21 percent of the migrants who crossed the U.S. border from Mexico last month.

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HEADLINE	06/16 Seattle rising costs for affordable housing
SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/news/2022/06/seattle-nearly-doubled-affordable-housing-funds-it-enough
GIST	<p>A funny thing about new affordable housing projects is that they are, at a glance, essentially indistinguishable from expensive market-rate apartment buildings. A casual observer might see the Bertha Pitts Campbell Place project with its glassy ground floor space and splashes of color on the façade and think it’s yet another new complex with built-in bowling alleys, movie theaters and \$3,000 per month rents.</p> <p>In reality, the 100 new studios at 12th Avenue and Spruce Street in Seattle’s Central District will provide deeply subsidized homes for people exiting homelessness.</p> <p>Plymouth Housing, the nonprofit developer behind Bertha Pitts Campbell Place, held a grand opening for the project on June 14. Plymouth specializes in permanent supportive housing for people who’ve experienced chronic homelessness. It combines long-term living spaces with on-site health care, counseling, career services and other support that residents often need after living on the street.</p> <p>“Adding 100 units of housing is a major contribution and major investment, and King County is proud to be participating in this project,” said King County Executive Dow Constantine at the grand opening. The county’s Health Through Housing program provided some of the funding for Plymouth’s project. “Dozens more people will be connected to the tools we know make a big difference in the lives of residents ... and also, fundamentally, [get] a secure, safe place to call home. All of that gives people the opportunity to rest, to heal, to ultimately take the steps to take more control to move forward with their lives.”</p> <p>Bertha Pitts Campbell Place is one of dozens of affordable housing projects in Seattle either opening in 2022 or under construction, the product of the city’s steady increase in housing spending over the past five years. The city and the county celebrate these new homes. But the need for new housing is so great — some estimate King County is short hundreds of thousands of housing units — that they’re only making a dent.</p>

The new project has three apartments for live-in staff, offices for on-site case management, a nurse's office, community rooms and an outdoor community space. The ground floor space will be operated by [St. Francis House](#), a nonprofit that has been providing food, clothing and day shelter for the homeless for 55 years.

The building is named for [Bertha Pitts Campbell](#), a longtime Central District community leader and civil rights activist. Residents begin moving in at the end of June.

"At the Office of Housing we know that providing permanent supportive housing is the solution to ending homelessness," said Seattle Office of Housing director Maiko Winkler-Chin at the grand opening. "We've seen time and again, when we are able to get people into homes, we are able to address the other things they need to thrive and lead great, healthy lives."

Affordable housing developers rely on a mix of financing to fund their projects, including grants and low-interest loans from the city, county and state, federal tax credits and traditional loans from banks. Most subsidized affordable housing projects in Seattle get money from the Office of Housing's rental housing loan program as part of that mix.

In 2017, the Office of Housing awarded \$93.4 million to affordable housing developers to build 944 units of new housing. In 2018, the number dipped to \$75.19 million in awards, but that was enough for 1,197 units of affordable housing. Last year, the Office of Housing's affordable housing investment grew to \$153 million, enough to build or acquire 1,910 units (several affordable housing developers were able to buy existing market-rate apartment buildings during the pandemic and operate them as subsidized housing).

Part of the reason the Office of Housing could expand its annual investments is its own pool of money has grown. The office's rental housing program has historically relied heavily on the \$290 million [Seattle Housing Levy](#), a voter-approved property tax that expires next year, as well as developer fees and federal grants.

In 2021, however, the rental housing program doled out just \$15.2 million from the Housing Levy. About \$50 million came from the [Mandatory Housing Affordability program](#), which requires for-profit residential and commercial developers to either build affordable housing in their projects or pay a fee to the Office of Housing. The rental housing program also had \$71.4 million from the ["JumpStart" payroll tax](#) on big businesses, along with \$16 million in federal money, including pandemic recovery grants.

Like any large construction project, affordable housing apartment buildings take a long time to plan and build. It's not uncommon for projects to take five years from conception to grand opening, as was the case with Bertha Pitts Campbell Place. That means there are many thousands of units of affordable housing in various stages of planning and construction in Seattle that will be opening in the years to come.

Years of insufficient housing construction, combined with Seattle's seemingly endless cost-of-living increases, mean those new apartments still won't be enough to meet the needs of Seattleites being squeezed out of the city or pushed into homelessness. But it will start to make a dent in the city's [stated goal of building 20,000 units](#) of subsidized affordable housing between 2015 and 2025.

The current affordable housing construction boom is complicated by the rising cost of essentially everything. Land costs are up. Construction costs are up. The cost of employing on-site staff to provide those wraparound services is up. Affordable housing projects that the city funded 30 to 40 years ago need expensive repairs and maintenance, and those costs are rising as well.

All of that means the increased investments from the Office of Housing aren't going to go as far. Winkler-Chin, the office's interim director, told Crosscut that there are no easy answers to deal with those rising costs. One piece of the puzzle, she said, will be renewing, and likely increasing, the size of

	<p>the Seattle Housing Levy when it's up for a vote in 2023. She couldn't say yet how large the next Housing Levy might be.</p> <p>"We're at this great permanent supportive housing building," said Winkler-Chin, referring to Bertha Pitts Campbell Place. "It's really pricey. And that's really what people need. It's a goofy statement, but the fix to homelessness is actually housing for these residents."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Settlement in housing foster kids practices
SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/news/2022/06/wa-settles-lawsuit-over-practices-housing-foster-kids
GIST	<p>For years, many foster kids in Washington with nowhere else to go have been put up in hotels, crammed into offices overnight or sent out of the state. The practices have been lambasted by lawmakers and advocates, and they sparked a class-action lawsuit last year.</p> <p>The state reached a settlement last week in that lawsuit — brought on by Disability Rights Washington and three young people who themselves were in foster care. In the settlement, the state agreed to implement new programs or bolster existing ones in the hopes of ending hotel or office stays.</p> <p>"What we've got here, I think, makes the world better," says Ross Hunter, secretary for the state Department of Children, Youth and Families.</p> <p>In the settlement submitted for approval in federal court, the state has agreed to create more housing for older teens who would prefer to live independently, add more "hub homes" to support foster parents and make a new class of "therapeutic" foster parents who can better support kids with disabilities.</p> <p>Susan Kas, an attorney with the legal advocacy group Disability Rights Washington, says these programs will help address the underlying causes for children ending up in hotels, offices or out of the state by giving more options for children and foster parents. Those placements were the result of the state having only limited choices for youth: foster parents, relatives or group homes.</p> <p>"Those options were just not fitting a lot of needs, particularly for young people with behavioral health or developmental disabilities," Kas says.</p> <p>The issue of foster kids being sent out of state was first raised in media reports several years ago, and InvestigateWest has written extensively about the state keeping kids in hotels.</p> <p>The state has made some progress. Disability Rights Washington found dismal conditions at an Iowa facility where kids were being sent, prompting the state to drastically reduce the number of out-of-state placements of foster kids and end placements to for-profit facilities.</p> <p>"My reaction was, OK, we don't like this. We stopped using the for-profit providers because we were unsatisfied with the care we were getting, and it went from 81 to around nine or 10 today," Hunter tells InvestigateWest.</p> <p>He says the remaining kids out of state are typically there for a "pretty good reason," such as having a job lined up there.</p> <p>As part of this lawsuit, which was filed in January 2021, the state agreed last year to end overnight hotel and office stays of foster youth. Since then, however, hotel stays have only increased. In the past nine months, 231 children have been placed in a hotel or other night-to-night placement option — more than in the entire year before that. In May, there were 439 hotel stays — or nights someone is housed in a hotel — the highest number of hotel stays in one month recorded since the Office of the Family and Children's Ombuds started tracking the data in 2017.</p>

Hunter says the department has tried to reduce hotel stays in the past year, but says the omicron surge played a role in reducing staffing and limiting group home options. The state has tried to create transitional living arrangements that would give kids a place other than hotels to stay in these situations, but the process has taken longer than Hunter thought it would.

“I’m an optimist. I thought we could get this all done in two months. No, we can’t,” Hunter says. “We’ve created a pathway to get solutions to these problems, but we have not completely solved them.”

Patrick Dowd, director of the Office of the Family and Children’s Ombuds, agrees that COVID-19 likely played a role in preventing added capacity for foster care placements. But Dowd says he’s encouraged with the recent settlement in the class-action lawsuit.

“It tries to address the problem of the lack of resources that results in children sleeping in hotels on a number of different fronts,” Dowd says.

Some of the programs the state agreed to in the lawsuit are already being implemented. Hub homes, for example, are an idea that builds a mutual support network of families with kids in foster care. So-called “satellite” families can receive support from an experienced foster family at the hub home, which can also provide mentoring and other support. The idea is part of a model from the nonprofit Mockingbird Society in Washington.

Hunter says there are seven or eight hub homes across the state, and the state is happy to expand on that. “We like them. It’s a good model,” Hunter says. “They have a pretty significant impact on retaining foster parents. That’s one I’m not worried about.”

But other elements of the settlement may be more challenging. Establishing a therapeutic level of foster parents, for example, may take more time, he says. These foster parents would be paid more and be qualified to support young people who may have disabilities. But the state will need to establish eligibility criteria, and foster parents will need to go through training first.

“There isn’t a hiring pool of prospective foster parents out there in the world,” Hunter says. “There’s work to be done there.”

It’s likely that the Department of Children, Youth and Families will ask for funding from the state Legislature next session to help implement some of these goals, though Hunter says “we will do as much within our existing authority as we can.”

As part of the settlement, the state will need to provide data to evaluate progress by 2024. The system improvements, Kas says, are meant to recognize that there needs to be “focus and attention” on making sure the services are trauma-informed, culturally responsive and LGBTQIA+ affirming.

Hunter has admitted that hotel stays and out-of-state placements are a major problem, noting that it’s a problem not just in Washington but all over the country. He says the state agreed to this settlement because he believes these changes can work.

“This is a huge challenge, and we want to do right by these kids,” Hunter says. “And it is very difficult to do.”

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HEADLINE	06/16 Seattle 1 of 11 US cities for 2026 World Cup
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/sports/sounders/seattle-selected-as-one-of-10-us-cities-to-host-2026-mens-world-cup/
GIST	A global spotlight will shine on Seattle again as the city learned Thursday it was selected to host FIFA men’s World Cup matches in 2026.

Soccer's governing body made the announcement during a live broadcast from New York City. Seattle is one of 11 U.S. cities, and 16 total, that will serve as venues for the revamped 48-team tournament that also includes matches in Canada and Mexico.

"We will show that this is a great soccer city; it's a great international city," Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell said. "But for me, it goes beyond sports. It has to do with the attitude of the city. We'll show the world that we have a great attitude here in this city."

Seattle and Vancouver, B.C., are the only host cities in the Pacific Northwest. The number of games and at what stage of the tournament they'll be played here are expected to be announced during summer 2023, but it's likely the Northwest will host two sets of group games with a possibility of one or two knockout-round games, according to the [North America bid](#) committee presentation.

Having three countries host the tournament is a first for FIFA. The event, which attracts billions globally, will run in the summer of 2026 with the final slated for July 12.

FIFA's selection committee visited Seattle last fall to evaluate its potential as a host. A bid committee dubbed SEA 2026 pitched the region and pledged to ensure the site is inclusive around factors like accessibility and sustainability.

The local committee spent the last five years organizing its bid in part because of what representatives believe will be a large economic boost for Seattle. The North America bid committee estimated the host cities will combine to generate more than \$5 billion in short-term economic activity, which could break down to as much as \$480 million per city.

The last megasporting event Seattle played a role in was the 1990 Goodwill Games. About 2,300 athletes from 54 countries competed in 21 sports across the state. Funded by Ted Turner, who had already organized an unsuccessful Games in Moscow in 1986, lost \$44 million on the 1990 event as expected crowds didn't arrive, [according to HistoryLink.org](#).

During the broadcast announcing the host cities, FIFA president Gianni Infantino said soccer would be the biggest sport in the U.S. by the time the 2026 World Cup winner was crowned. There was that feeling on Thursday at SEA 2026's public celebration at Waterfront Park.

Music blared from the stage as hundreds of people mingled, some in soccer jerseys, and dined on free meals from food trucks or played on a mini pitch built by the Sounders. A throng of civic and sporting leaders were in attendance. Gov. Jay Inslee joined King County executive Dow Constantine and Harrell among the speakers.

"We've got some work to do to catch up," Sounders coach Brian Schmetzer said of the sport eclipsing the NFL in popularity. "It's certainly going to springboard us into bigger and better things."

"The World Cup, what it did for us in 1994, it launched MLS a couple of years later. The sheer volume of people, money, everything that's being thrown at this, it's a really huge event. The Super Bowl is probably the biggest deal in the United States, this will match that, for sure, and then you've got that Super Bowl in multiple cities."

The Sounders announced plans for their [first headquarters, at Longacres in Renton](#), that was office space for Boeing Commercial Airplanes. While the Sounders will retain the original building, land will need to be cleared to build four fields, two with natural grass, with unveiling expected in January 2024.

FIFA requires grass for tournament matches. When the Washington Public Stadium Authority Bill (Referendum 48) passed in 1997 to build what is now Lumen Field, there was a provision that grass be installed. The Sounders play on turf, but the grounds were fitted for grass for the Copa America in 2016 and discussions between stadium officials and FIFA are already underway to seed grass by January 2026 at the earliest.

“The stadium was built for this,” said Zach Hensley, the vice president of operations and general manager of Lumen Field. “There’s a lot of infrastructure changes we’ll be making for FIFA; one will be the natural grass installation.

“We’ll be installing it natively; it will not be installed over turf. There are other specifications that FIFA requires you to do, like buying grow lights and other infrastructure underneath the grass. It’s a big process. And most likely there is some time leading up to World Cup that there will not be able to be any activity on that, we’re not sure exactly what those times are right now.”

Hensley is part of a five-person group traveling to New York this weekend to meet with FIFA and the other 2026 World Cup host cities.

The next public event will be a FanFest at Pier 62 and viewing parties for the Qatar World Cup.

“There’s no exhale,” said Maya Mendoza-Exstrom, the Sounders external affairs chief operating officer, who will make the trip to New York. “The cool thing is it’s the same people at the table. This sports community, this business community and the government leads, we’re all working on these things, so we don’t have to reinvent the wheel.”

Seattle wasn’t selected when the World Cup was last held in the U.S. in 1994. Nearly three decades later, the 2026 event will be the biggest sporting event Seattle has hosted.

Seattle hosted five NCAA men’s Final Fours, the first in 1949. The NBA (1974, 1987), WNBA (2017) and MLB (1979, 2001) held their All-Star Games in the city while the Special Olympics USA Games were held in Seattle in 2018. Regionally, the 1998 PGA Championship was at the Sahalee Country Club in Sammamish, the 2002 NEC World Championship at Sahalee and the 2015 U.S. Open at Chambers Bay at University Place.

“In ’94, we just weren’t quite there as a city to host,” Sounders majority owner Adrian Hanauer said. “But, 28 years has changed this city a lot. The industry and the arts and the infrastructure and the thought leadership — there are so many areas where this area has become a leader nationwide, North America and globally in some cases, not to mention an unbelievable soccer city.

“All of that together, in retrospect made this [World Cup selection] a no-brainer, but it definitely didn’t feel like a no-brainer at 2:14 p.m. when I was watching it on TV.”

Hanauer, a Seattle native who grew up playing soccer, was emotional once he saw “Seattle” on the screen, proclaiming it a host city.

“It was nerve-wracking and emotional,” Hanauer said. “I walked downstairs with tears coming down and my girlfriend said, ‘are your allergies bothering you?’ No, 20 years of working toward this — no, I’m emotional.”

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HEADLINE	06/16 Dutch intel disrupts GRU access to ICC
SOURCE	https://english.aivd.nl/latest/news/2022/06/16/aivd-disrupts-activities-of-russian-intelligence-officer-targeting-the-international-criminal-court
GIST	<p>The AIVD prevented a Russian intelligence officer from gaining access as an intern to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague. The person in question works for the Russian Military Intelligence Service GRU, but he used a Brazilian cover identity to travel from Brazil to the Netherlands.</p> <p>The AIVD holds him to be a threat to national security, and the service informed the Dutch Immigration and Naturalization Service about this in an official report (“ambtsbericht”).</p>

On these grounds the intelligence officer was refused entry into the Netherlands in April and declared unacceptable. He was sent back to Brazil on the first flight out.

The ICC has also been informed of this case.

Illegals: extensively trained intelligence officers

The Russian intelligence officer purported to be Brazilian citizen Viktor Muller Ferreira (born on 4 April 1989), when in fact his real name is Sergey Vladimirovich Cherkasov (born 11 September 1985). Cherkasov used a well-constructed cover identity by which he concealed all his ties with Russia in general, and the GRU in particular.

An officer of this kind is better known as an “illegal”: an intelligence officer who received a long and extensive training. Because of their alias identity, illegals are difficult to discover. For that reason they often remain undetected, allowing them to carry out intelligence activities. Because they present themselves as foreigners, they have access to information that would be inaccessible to a Russian national. In addition to the GRU, the Russian intelligence service SVR also makes use of illegals.

The GRU's main focus is on gathering military intelligence, but it also collects intelligence that is more political or technological in nature. The GRU not only collects information, its officers also carry out covert influencing operations.

International Criminal Court

The International Criminal Court investigates possible war crimes committed by Russia in Ukraine. The ICC is also investigating war crimes that took place during the Russian war in Georgia in 2008. For those reasons, covert access to International Criminal Court information would be highly valuable to the Russian intelligence services.

The illegal was supposed to commence an internship with the ICC, which would mean he would have access to the ICC's building and systems.

Potentially very high threat

The AIVD cooperates with the MIVD and other partners in order to mitigate any possible damage to national security and the security and integrity of international organisations. The threat posed by this intelligence officer is deemed potentially very high.

If the intelligence officer had succeeded in gaining access as an intern to the ICC, he would have been able to gather intelligence there and to look for (or recruit) sources, and arrange to have access to the ICC's digital systems.

That way he would have been able to provide a significant contribution to the intelligence that the GRU is seeking. He might also have been able to influence criminal proceedings of the ICC.

Complex cover identity

Illegals pose an extremely serious threat to national security, to the security of allies, and in this particular case also to the security and integrity of the ICC. Awareness about these and other kinds of intelligence threats are of the utmost importance, especially in view of current international developments.

The document describing the extensive and complex cover identity of this intelligence officer is enclosed with this press release (also translated in Dutch and Portuguese), providing a glimpse of the modus operandi of this Russian intelligence officer. The construction of this kind of cover identity generally takes years to complete.

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Click on link for publication: **Publications**
[Cover identity of Russian intelligence officer](#)

SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/06/16/homes/mortgage-rates-june-16/index.html
GIST	<p>Mortgage rates surged by more than half a percentage point this week amid rising inflation and an interest rate hike by the Federal Reserve, according to Freddie Mac. The jump is the largest one-week increase since 1987.</p> <p>The 30-year fixed-rate mortgage averaged 5.78% in the week ending June 16, up from 5.23% the week before. Rates have risen more than two-and-a-half percentage points this year. They were at an average of 2.93% this time last year.</p> <p>“These higher rates are the result of a shift in expectations about inflation and the course of monetary policy,” said Sam Khater, Freddie Mac’s chief economist. “Higher mortgage rates will lead to moderation from the blistering pace of housing activity that we have experienced coming out of the pandemic, ultimately resulting in a more balanced housing market.”</p> <p>Rates have risen sharply since January, pushing the cost of financing a home up significantly.</p> <p>Buyers are finding homes even less affordable as inflation takes a larger chunk of their income and the cost of borrowing has reduced their purchasing power.</p> <p>A year ago a buyer who put 20% down on a median priced \$390,000 home and financed the rest with a 30-year, fixed-rate mortgage at an average interest rate of 2.93% had a monthly mortgage payment of \$1,304, according to numbers from Freddie Mac.</p> <p>Today, a homeowner buying the same priced house with an average rate of 5.78% would pay \$1,827 a month in principal and interest. That’s \$523 more each month, according to numbers from Freddie Mac. The average mortgage rate surged higher this week in response to worse-than-expected inflation data last week and in anticipation of Federal Reserve rate hikes that came Wednesday.</p> <p>Making good on its promise to raise rates in order to stem inflation, the Federal Reserve raised the interest rate target by 75 basis points, the largest increase in nearly three decades. And there is no reason to expect the increases will stop there. In comments following the announcement, Fed Chairman Jerome Powell emphasized the Fed’s commitment to bringing inflation down to the 2% goal by continuing to raise rates.</p> <p>The Federal Reserve does not set the interest rates borrowers pay on mortgages directly, but its actions influence them. Mortgage rates tend to track 10-year US Treasury bonds. But mortgage rates are indirectly impacted by the Fed’s actions on inflation. As investors see or anticipate rate hikes, they often sell government bonds, which sends yields higher and with it, mortgage rates.</p> <p>The 10-year treasury yield climbed to 3.48% on Tuesday – the highest in 11 years – as investors anticipated Wednesday’s interest rate hike.</p> <p>Surging rates have the effect of putting the brakes on the housing market, which has been moving full speed ahead for the past two years.</p> <p>“Climbing mortgage rates continue to put pressure on the housing market, pushing the cost of homeownership ever higher,” said Hannah Jones, Economic Data Analyst at Realtor.com. “There has been little relief for American consumers at the grocery store, the pump, and in both the for-sale and rental markets.”</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Sanctions fail to dent Russia war effort
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/sanctions-so-far-fail-to-dent-russias-war-effort-11655383912
GIST	Sanctions on Russia, offset by a windfall from high-price energy exports, haven’t inflicted enough economic pain so far to hurt Moscow’s war effort or push President Vladimir Putin to the negotiating table.

That resilience isn't expected to last, with many economists predicting a deep recession later this year, a rise in poverty and a long-term degradation of the country's economic potential. For now, [the slow pace of sanctions](#), Russia's successful efforts to stabilize its economy and its ability to keep oil and gas flowing overseas have cushioned the blow for Moscow.

That is allowing Russia to continue [its war effort in Ukraine](#) for now, said Janis Kluge, an expert in the Russian economy at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs.

"Right now, the economic sanctions are not an incentive for Russia to negotiate," Mr. Kluge said. "The Kremlin is convinced it can withstand a few years with a bad economy and wait for better days. Russia is emboldened by its own success in fending off the West's sanctions."

On Thursday, some of Russia's top economic officials spoke at [the annual St. Petersburg International Economic Forum](#), which was empty of its normal crowd of global political, economic and business leaders. While staying positive, they acknowledged the long-term problems the economy faces.

"We've managed to persevere, we're a strong people and we just need to believe in ourselves," Maxim Oreshkin, economic adviser to Mr. Putin, said at the forum.

The economic resilience means that Moscow is able to exert pressure on European countries, which are dependent on its oil and gas supplies. Russia's energy leverage was on display this week as state-owned Gazprom PJSC [curtailed gas shipments to Germany and Italy](#) in what the German economy minister, Robert Habeck, called "a strategy to unsettle and drive up prices." Russia had previously cut off gas supplies to Poland, Bulgaria and Finland.

Despite Europe's frantic efforts to wean itself off Russian energy, including through a phased oil embargo by the end of this year, Russia is still earning hundreds of millions of dollars every day from its oil and gas sales because of elevated global prices. Even as Europeans limit purchases, Moscow has been able to reroute some of its oil flows to India and other customers across Asia.

As a result, Russia's current-account surplus, a broad measure of its foreign trade, more than tripled in the first five months of the year to \$110 billion and is on track to finish the year at a record, allowing Russia to accumulate significant reserves. [Russia has been spending money](#) to stimulate the economy, rather than stashing it all away in a rainy-day fund.

"The country's structural current account surplus inevitably reduces sanctions' effectiveness over time since it leads to a quick rebuilding of buffers," the Institute of International Finance, a global association of the financial industry, wrote in a report this month.

The IIF estimates that if commodity prices remain high and Russia's oil and gas exports hold up, Moscow could receive more than \$300 billion in payments for its energy sales this year—roughly equivalent to the amount of Russia's foreign reserves frozen by Western sanctions.

"We're not seeing the Big Bang crisis that many people were expecting," said Christopher Miller, assistant professor of international history at the Fletcher School at Tufts University who focuses on the Russian economy. "The real impact will be felt over time."

The challenge for Western countries is augmented by the fact that the more they tighten the screws on Russia, the more they risk collateral damage on their own economies, already facing fast-rising consumer prices. To balance that risk, Western countries are going slow on sanctions tied to energy. One of the most significant moves so far was the European Union's agreement to halt oil imports that would cover 90% of previous Russian shipments. The sanctions though won't take full effect until the end of this year.

"There is not much left in the arsenal of the West except for sanctions on Russia energy exports, which are not feasible politically for Western governments under current conditions of high inflation and extremely

tight energy markets,” Mr. Kluge said. “The sanctions are devastating for Russia’s economic outlook in the long run, but they have not undermined Putin’s grip on power” for now.

Mr. Putin has played down the economic impact of sanctions, saying that the West’s economic blitzkrieg has failed. A short-term crisis was prevented by quick action from Russia’s central bank, which Mr. Putin has long relied on to keep the economy running smoothly.

“The situation is very complex, it’s very challenging, the situation is continuously changing,” Elvira Nabiullina, head of Russia’s central bank, said Thursday. “External circumstances have changed for a long time, if not forever.”

The impact of Western sanctions, meanwhile, has been uneven. While [financial-sector measures](#)—including cutting major Russian banks from the Swift messaging system and prohibiting transactions with the central bank—had an immediate effect, the macroeconomic impact will take time, analysts say.

“Economic sanctions were never going to stop Russia’s actions overnight, but are intended to raise the price of their continuation,” the IIF report said. “Eventually, the price may reach a level where Russia’s war on Ukraine becomes prohibitively expensive.”

When that level might be reached is unclear, though the contours of the future economic malaise are already visible.

High inflation is already [eroding real disposable incomes](#), which fell by 1.2% in the first quarter of the year compared with last year, while the poverty rate increased, according to official statistics. Shortages of imported parts have shut down whole car manufacturing plants. To keep production going, [the government allowed cars to be sold without air bags](#).

The Russian government has doubled down on its policy of import substitution, which aims to replace foreign goods with homemade ones, despite little evidence over the years that the policy actually works. Still, officials are acknowledging that it would take time for Russia to adjust to the loss of access to Western imports and know-how.

“Our objective is to replace everything, but we cannot do it all of a sudden,” said Mr. Oreshkin, the Russian presidential adviser. Andrey Makarov, head of the Russian legislature’s budget committee, acknowledged the trade-offs. “Do we pursue a policy of import substitution with less quality and more expense?” he asked.

The economic impacts are expected to grow in the second half of the year. Analysts forecast that unemployment, which has remained steady so far as companies were able to put workers on furlough or cut wages, will climb in the fall. Many of [the more than 1,000 foreign companies](#) that have pledged to curtail operations in the country have continued to pay workers as they work out exit plans.

“The problems for Russia’s economy will increase over the summer and into the autumn, but only gradually,” Mr. Kluge said.

On Tuesday, NLMK Group, one of Russia’s largest steelmakers, predicted that the country’s steel production would fall by 26% in the second half of the year compared with last year.

All told, the IIF expects the Russian economy to contract by 15% this year, followed by a further 3% decline in 2023, wiping out economic gains of roughly 15 years. Other analysts expect a smaller but still substantial dent in gross domestic product of around 10% this year.

Over time, sanctions would cause “a reduction in productivity across sectors and a reduction in quality of goods across sectors,” Mr. Miller said.

	<p>Analysts at the central bank call this coming period reverse industrialization, meaning economic growth based on less sophisticated technology.</p> <p>For workers at the Kaliningrad-based Avtotor factory, that is already a reality. Last month, owing to what it called the “difficult economic situation,” the company, which once assembled Chevrolets and BMWs, began handing out farmland to workers facing furlough to plant potatoes.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Issaquah cops cleared excess force arrest
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/jury-sides-with-issaquah-officers-in-lawsuit-over-death-of-man-who-suffered-fatal-neck-injury/
GIST	<p>A jury has sided with two Issaquah police officers who were sued by the wife of a 66-year-old man who died after suffering a neck injury when he was detained by police investigating a 2018 domestic dispute.</p> <p>A unanimous seven-member jury in U.S. District Court in Seattle sided with officers Michael Lucht and Kylen Whittom after eight days of testimony and a single day of deliberations about the circumstances surrounding the death of Wangsheng Leng.</p> <p>Leng was hospitalized and underwent surgery for spinal cord decompression after falling limp when officers pushed him onto a couch and handcuffed him. He died a month after the incident.</p> <p>The King County Medical Examiner ruled the death a homicide, stating that Leng had died as a result of complications from a “blunt force injury to the neck,” which “occurred in circumstances involving the use of physical restraint.”</p> <p>The officers’ attorneys disputed Liping Yang’s lawsuit, which alleged the officers had used excessive force during her husband’s arrest. The defense argued Leng was frail and had health problems, unknown to the officers, that contributed to his death.</p> <p>“The City of Issaquah is pleased the federal jury unanimously found the actions of its police officers were reasonable, necessary and lawful,” the officers’ attorneys, Shannon Ragonesi and Brian Augenthaler of the Seattle firm Keating McCormick Bucklin, said in a joint statement.</p> <p>“The facts proved, and the jury found, there was no excessive police force used in this case. Mr. Leng’s injury and eventual death would not have happened if he did not have serious, preexisting medical conditions that were completely unknown to the officers at the time the physical force was applied.”</p> <p>David Owens, one of Yang’s attorneys, called the verdict “more than disappointing” and “a heartbreaking reminder that injustice perpetuates injustice.”</p> <p>“It is a reminder that our court system can, and does, re-traumatize innocent people subject to arbitrary violence by the government,” Owens said in an email. “The verdict is not only wrong, it is trauma that our client and their family did not deserve and did not choose.</p> <p>“An innocent man is dead, killed by the police, and left with little recourse. This should not be the case. So, while standing up to the court-sanctioned culture of violence at the core of policing is a difficult but not impossible task, the fight continues.”</p> <p>The officers had responded to the couple’s apartment after a neighbor called police on Aug. 5, 2018, to report yelling and sounds of items being thrown next door.</p> <p>The officers’ versions of the following events differed sharply from that of Yang.</p>

	<p>They said that when Yang opened the door, Leng was behind her, pulling on her shirt. Yang, in sworn testimony, said her husband, who had Alzheimer's, stood behind but didn't touch her. She said the officers' claims that he had grabbed her were "not true," according to the court file.</p> <p>The officers contend that as they were trying to communicate with Yang, the door to the apartment began to close and Lucht decided to enter the home.</p> <p>Lucht claimed that Leng came at him once he got inside the apartment. Yang has disputed that account, however, saying she invited the officers in and that nobody tried to close the door.</p> <p>Yang said the officers grabbed her husband and pulled him toward a couch, where they pushed him face down and attempted to handcuff him, using their weight to hold him down, according to the pleadings.</p> <p>In their police report, the officers said Leng was briefly detained but that he did not assault them and that no injuries resulted from the arrest. They insisted they used minimal force to restrain Leng and that they were gentle when they restrained him by putting him face down on the couch.</p> <p>U.S. District Judge Thomas Zilly initially sent the case to trial, prompting the officers to file an appeal.</p> <p>A three-judge panel from the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals later found the officers acted reasonably and legally in entering the home and deciding to briefly detain Yeng in handcuffs. The judges sent the case back to District Court, however, for a jury to determine whether the officers used excessive force during the arrest.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Juneteenth holiday and flag symbolism
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/life/the-meaning-of-the-juneteenth-flag-and-more-you-should-know-about-the-holiday/
GIST	<p>Juneteenth is a day of remembrance dedicated to the last enslaved Black Americans, who were freed in Galveston, Texas, on June 19, 1865, more than two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation was signed by President Abraham Lincoln.</p> <p>Here's what to know about the holiday, which was federally recognized last year.</p> <p>Official observance On June 17, 2021, President Joe Biden signed into law the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act making Juneteenth a federal holiday. It was the first federal holiday to be added to the calendar since Martin Luther King Jr. Day in 1983.</p> <p>Although Texas recognized Juneteenth as a holiday in 1980, it has taken decades for other states to pass legislation acknowledging the significance of the day. Today, all states and the District of Columbia have laws recognizing Juneteenth as a holiday or day of observance. In some states, including Washington, Juneteenth is an official paid holiday for state employees.</p> <p>Who created the flag? Boston community activist Ben Haith, founder of the National Juneteenth Celebration Foundation, created the Juneteenth flag in 1997 as a symbol to represent the holiday.</p> <p>Flag-raising events The racial reckoning sparked by the police killing of George Floyd in 2020 increased awareness about the importance of Juneteenth. Flag-raising ceremonies at state capitol buildings and elsewhere have spread across the country to mark the holiday.</p> <p>The flag's symbolism The flag includes several symbols, each with a unique meaning.</p>

	<p>The star represents freedom for every Black American in every state. It also pays homage to the Lone Star of Texas, where the last enslaved people were freed.</p> <p>The burst surrounding the star symbolizes a new beginning for all.</p> <p>The arc represents a new horizon of opportunities for Black Americans.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Thousands of cattle dead in heat wave
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/thousands-cattle-dead-amid-continuing-heat-wave/story?id=85434516
GIST	<p>Thousands of cattle in Kansas have died as a national heat wave scorches the U.S., leaving one of the country's leading cattle farming states with a loss amid rising production costs.</p> <p>At least 2,000 cattle have died as of Tuesday, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment told ABC News.</p> <p>The cattle deaths happened throughout the weekend, as extreme heat and humidity persisted through Saturday and Sunday.</p> <p>AJ Tarpoff, associate professor and beef extension veterinarian at Kansas State University, told ABC News that multiple factors led to the heat stress that caused the cattle to die.</p> <p>"The temperature spiked, the humidity spiked, but the wind speed dropped," Tarpoff said. "This is quite rare for this region of western Kansas, and it lasted for over one day."</p> <p>Tarpoff added that since nighttime temperatures were higher than usual, the cattle did not receive the normal cooling time they need to counter heat stress.</p> <p>Scarlett Hagins, a spokesperson for the Kansas Livestock Association, said there was a 10 to 15-degree spike over Saturday night, which was a drastic jump in temperatures for the area.</p> <p>"There was little wind, and the temperature didn't really cool down overnight," Hagins told ABC News. "The cattle just didn't have time to acclimate because it happened so fast."</p> <p>Tarpoff said cattle are generally adaptable animals, but this weather event was particularly stressful because of the fast temperature change.</p> <p>"Cattle are a robust animal; they can adapt to all kinds of weather all over the world," Tarpoff said. "Some animals just did not have time to adapt [from the spring season] and some were still shedding their winter coats." "Going forward, cattle can adapt quickly, as long as the wind keeps. It all depends on nighttime cooling hours and wind speed."</p> <p>Hagins said Kansas markets 5.5 million cattle each year, so while the loss of these 2,000 was unfortunate, this event should not affect market prices or the supply chain for beef.</p> <p>"People shouldn't worry about seeing beef on the shelves or seeing the price of beef go up," Hagins said.</p> <p>Hagins said ranchers in Kansas have mitigation protocols to deal with summer heat, which usually does not spike as it did over the weekend.</p> <p>"Heat stress is always a concern, but there are mitigation protocols in place and we usually can protect against these kinds of deaths," Hagins said.</p>

	<p>Hagins said many ranchers make sure to increase water availability for cattle as temperatures rise, and also adjust feeding schedules for the animals.</p> <p>"They will change what time they are feeding or what kind of food they are feeding the cattle so that they are not digesting during the hot hours because when cattle digest, their bodies get warmer," Hagins said.</p> <p>The cattle deaths come amidst a national heat wave that has nearly 100 million Americans under heat advisories.</p> <p>U.S. residents from California to Pennsylvania face heat indexes nearing or surpassing triple digits.</p> <p>For even the country's hottest regions, such temperatures are abnormal for early summer, and extreme weather events persist among the increasing effects of climate change.</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	06/16 DOJ: Russia hacking botnet dismantled
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/us-partners-dismantle-russian-hacking-botnet-justice-dept-says-2022-06-16/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON, June 16 (Reuters) - Law enforcement in the United States, Germany, the Netherlands and Britain dismantled a global network of internet-connected devices that had been hacked by Russian cyber criminals and used for malicious purposes, the U.S. Justice Department said on Thursday.</p> <p>The network, known as the "RSOCKS" botnet, comprised millions of hacked computers and devices worldwide, including "Internet of Things" gadgets like routers and smart garage openers, the department said in a statement.</p> <p>RSOCKS users paid a fee of between \$30 and \$200 per day to route malicious internet activity through compromised devices to mask or hide the true source of the traffic, the department said.</p> <p>"It is believed that the users of this type of proxy service were conducting large scale attacks against authentication services, also known as credential stuffing, and anonymizing themselves when accessing compromised social media accounts, or sending malicious email, such as phishing messages," it said.</p> <p>Several large public and private entities have been victims of RSOCKS, including a university, a hotel, a television studio and an electronics manufacturer, the department said. It did not name any of them.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/17 Ransomware threat remains
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-technology-united-states-costa-rica-central-america-194c69b0966dac785d2be613c7734dd
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — Teachers unable to get paychecks. Tax and customs systems paralyzed. Health officials unable to access medical records or track the spread of COVID-19. A country's president declaring war against foreign hackers saying they want to overthrow the government.</p> <p>For two months now, Costa Rica has been reeling from unprecedented ransomware attacks disrupting everyday life in the Central American nation. It's a situation raising questions about the United States' role in protecting friendly nations from cyberattacks at a time when Russian-based criminal gangs are targeting less developed countries in ways that could have major global repercussions.</p> <p>"Today it's Costa Rica. Tomorrow it could be the Panama Canal," said Belisario Contreras, former manager of the cybersecurity program at the Organization of American States, referring to a major Central American shipping lane that carries a large amount of U.S. import and export traffic.</p>

Last year, cybercriminals launched ransomware attacks in the U.S. that forced the shutdown of an oil pipeline that supplies the East Coast, halted production of the world's largest meat-processing company and compromised a major software-company that has thousands of customers around the world.

The Biden administration responded with a whole of government action that included included diplomatic, law enforcement, and intelligence efforts designed to put pressure on ransomware operators.

Since then, ransomware gangs have shied away from "big-game" targets in the U.S. in pursuit of victims unlikely to provoke a strong response by the U.S.

"They're still prolific, they're making enormous amounts of money, but they're just not in the news everyday," Eleanor Fairford, a deputy director at the UK's National Cyber Security Centre, said at a recent U.S. conference on ransomware.

Tracking trends of ransomware attacks, in which criminals encrypt victims' data and demand payment to return them to normal, is difficult. NCC Group, a UK cybersecurity firm that tracks ransomware attacks, said the number of ransomware incidents per month so far this year has been higher than it was in 2021. The company noted that the ransomware group CL0P, which has aggressively targeted schools and health care organizations, returned to work after effectively shutting down for several months.

But Rob Joyce, the director of cybersecurity at the National Security Agency, has said publicly that there's been a decrease in the number of ransomware attacks since Russia's invasion of Ukraine thanks to increased heightened concerns of cyberattacks and new sanctions that make it harder for Russian-based criminals to move money.

The ransomware gang known as Conti launched the first attack against the Costa Rican government in April and has demanded a \$20 million payout, prompting the newly installed President Chaves Robles to declare a state of emergency as the tax and customs offices, utilities and other services were taken offline. "We're at war and this is not an exaggeration," he said.

Later, a second attack, attributed to a group known as Hive knocked out the public health service and other systems. Information about individual prescriptions are offline and some workers have gone weeks without their paycheck. It's caused significant hardship for people like 33-year-old teacher Alvaro Fallas.

"I live with my parents and brother and they are depending on me," he said.

In Peru, Conti has also attacked the country's intelligence agency. The gang's darkweb extortion site posts purportedly stolen documents with the agency's information, like one document market "secret" that details coca-eradication efforts.

Experts believe developing countries like Costa Rica and Peru will remain particularly ripe targets. These countries have invested in digitizing their economy and systems but don't have as sophisticated defenses as wealthier nations .

Costa Rica has been a longtime stable force in a region often known for upheaval. It has a long established democratic tradition and well-run government services.

Paul Rosenzweig, a former top DHS official and cyber consultant who is now a legal resident of Costa Rica, said the country presents a test case for what exactly the U.S. government owes its friendly and allied governments who fall victim to disruptive ransomware attacks. While an attack on a foreign country may not have any direct impact on U.S. interests, the federal government still has a strong interest in limiting the ways in which ransomware criminals can disrupt the global digital economy, he said.

“Costa Rica is a perfectly good example because it’s the first,” Rosenzweig said. “Nobody has seen a government under assault before.”

So far, the Biden administration has said little publicly about the situation in Costa Rica. The U.S. has provided some technical assistance through its Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, via an information-sharing program with nations around the world. And the State Department has offered a reward for the arrest of members of Conti.

Eric Goldstein, the executive assistant director for cybersecurity at CISA, said Costa Rica has a computer emergency response team that had an established relationship with counterparts in the U.S. before the incidents. But his agency is expanding its international presence by establishing its first overseas attache position in the U.K. It plans others in as-yet unspecified locations.

“If we think about our role, CISA and the US government, it is intrinsically of course to protect American organizations. But we know intuitively that the same threat actors are using the same vulnerabilities to target victims around the world,” he said.

Conti is one of the more prolific ransomware gangs currently operation and has hit over 1,000 targets and received more than \$150 million in payouts in the last two years, per FBI estimates.

At the start of invasion of Ukraine, some of Conti’s members pledged on the group’s dark web site to “use all our possible resources to strike back at the critical infrastructures of an enemy” if Russia was attacked. Shortly afterward, sensitive chat logs that appear to belong to the gang were leaked online, some of which appeared to show ties between the gang and the Russian government.

Some cyber threat researchers say Conti may be in the middle of a rebranding, and its attack on Costa Rica may be a publicity stunt to provide a plausible story for the group’s demise. Ransomware groups that receive lots of media attention often disappear, only for its members to pop back up later operating under a new name.

On its darkweb site, Conti has denied that’s the case and continues to post victims’ files. The gang’s most recent targets include a city parks department in Illinois, a manufacturing company in Oklahoma and food distributor in Chile.

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HEADLINE	06/16 Iran-linked APT targets Israel officials
SOURCE	https://threatpost.com/phishing-attack-israeli-officials/179987/
GIST	<p>Analysts have uncovered an Iran-linked APT sending malicious emails to top Israeli government officials.</p> <p>An advanced persistent threat group, with ties to Iran, is believed behind a phishing campaign targeting high-profile government and military Israeli personnel, according to a report by Check Point Software. Targets of the campaign included a senior leadership in the Israeli defense industry, the former U.S. Ambassador to Israel and the former Deputy Prime Minister of Israel.</p> <p>The goal of the campaign, the researchers said, was to obtain personal information from targets.</p> <p>Fake Emails from Legit Addresses</p> <p>One of the targets, according to Check Point, is Tzipi Livni, Israel’s former foreign minister, minister of justice and vice prime minister. Researchers believe that the target was selected because of the high-caliber list of contacts in her address book.</p> <p>Not long ago she received an email from, according to the researchers, “a well-known former Major General in the IDF who served in a highly sensitive position.” The sender address was not spoofed – it was the same domain she’d corresponded with before. Translated from Hebrew, the message read:</p>

*Hello my dear friends, Please see attached article to summarize the year. ((*eyes only*)) Of course I don't want it to be distributed, because it is not the final version. I would be happy to receive remarks of any kind. Have a great rest of the day.*

The message contained a link. Livni delayed in clicking the link, prompting several follow-up emails. *Good morning, I haven't heard from you. Some friends sent me remarks. Your remarks are also very important to me. I know you are very busy. But I wanted to ask you to take your time and read the article. Good week*

The persistence of the sender and flurry of messages raised her suspicions, according to Check Point. After Livni met with the former Major General, it became clear that the emails were sent from a compromised account and the contents of the messages were part of a phishing attack.

It was a similar story for the other targets in this campaign – suspect emails were being sent from legitimate contacts.

What Really Happened

The method of attack wasn't particularly technical. "The most sophisticated part of the operation is the social engineering," Sergey Shykevich, threat intelligence group manager at Check Point Research, noted. He said, the campaign was "a very targeted phishing chain that is specifically crafted for each target." Personally crafted phishing emails is a technique called spear phishing.

The attackers initiated their spear phishing attacks, first by compromising an email address book belonging to a contact of their target. Then, using the hijacked account, they'd continue an already existing email chain between the contact and the target. In time, they'd steer the conversation towards conning the target to clicking on or opening a malicious link or document.

"Some of the emails include a link to a real document that is relevant to the target," Check Point's analysts noted. For example, an "invitation to a conference or research, phishing page of Yahoo, link to upload document scans."

"The goal," in the end, was "to steal their personal information, passport scans, and steal access to their mail accounts."

Who and Why

"We have solid evidence that it started at least from December 2021," Shykevich wrote, "but we assume that it started earlier."

In their analysis, the researchers found evidence they believe points to the Iran-linked Phosphorus APT group (a.k.a. Charming Kitten, Ajax Security, NewsBeef, APT35). Phosphorus is one of Iran's [most active](#) APTs, with "a long history of conducting high-profile cyber operations, aligned with the interest of the Iranian regime, as well as targeting Israeli officials."

Iran and Israel are usually at odds, and these attacks came "in the midst of escalating tensions between Israel and Iran. With recent assassinations of Iranian officials (some affiliated with the Israeli's Mossad), and the thwarted attempts to kidnap Israeli citizens worldwide, we suspect that Phosphorous will continue with its ongoing efforts in the future."

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HEADLINE	06/16 Ransomware risk in healthcare
SOURCE	https://threatpost.com/ransomware-risk-healthcare/179980/
GIST	Ryan Witt, Proofpoint's Healthcare Cybersecurity Leader, examines the impact of ransomware on patient care.

In the last two years, COVID-19 has occupied healthcare providers' minds — rightfully so, considering the pandemic's tremendous toll on patients. But another threat that causes immense harm gets less attention: ransomware. While ransomware attacks receive lots of headlines, the irreparable damage that this threat could cause patients is often missing from the discussion.

Cyberattacks are a different kind of a pandemic that's substantially increased over the last several years. They have become an everyday reality for the healthcare sector. Healthcare leaders understand cyber threats are a "new normal." But the cyber-risk conversation typically centers on the bottom line, such as the costs of mitigation, noncompliance, or lawsuits.

For a sector whose mission is to improve our quality of life, it's surprising that the top cybersecurity concerns revolve around financial losses. Healthcare leaders, physicians, and other care providers need to look at cybersecurity risks through a new lens — patient health and safety.

Ransomware and Health Professionals Promise to 'Do No Harm'

Healthcare professionals devote their attention to protecting patients from harm. In today's digital world, this mandate is no longer limited to direct-care delivery. A ransomware attack puts patients physically at risk and might be as devastating as a life-threatening disease.

Consider the attack that crippled operations at the University of Vermont Medical Center (UVMC) in the fall of 2020. After ransomware shuttered access to systems like electronic health records for almost a month, UVMC's cancer center had to turn away hundreds of chemotherapy patients.

The cancer clinic largely served rural areas, so the cyberattack not only left many of those patients with fear, anguish, and tears but also with no treatment alternatives. [The New York Times](#) quoted one nurse as saying, "To look someone in the eye, and tell them they cannot have their life-extending or lifesaving treatment, it was horrible, and totally heart-wrenching."

Stories like those of the UVMC patients rarely unravel in public, but they're far from unique. A recent [Ponemon Institute report](#) (PDF) found that a ransomware attack hit 43% of surveyed healthcare delivery organizations in the past two years. Consequences included poor outcomes because of procedure or test delays (experienced by 70% of hospitals affected by ransomware), increased complications from medical procedures (36%), and a rise in mortality rates (22%).

Rethinking the Importance of Cybersecurity

ECRI, a nonprofit focused on patient safety, named cybersecurity attacks the [top health technology hazard](#) (PDF) for 2022. The factors that influenced the ranking included severity, frequency, breadth, and preventability. The ECRI report drove home the point that cybersecurity incidents "don't just interfere with business operations — they can disrupt patient care, posing a real threat of physical harm."

Expect this risk to loom large as threat actors target the sector at an alarming pace. UVMC is a case in point — just days after [U.S. government officials warned](#) about imminent cyberattacks by Russian hackers on American hospitals, they hit the medical center. It wasn't the first such alarm.

Cybersecurity, of course, is not a fresh problem for the sector. IT and cybersecurity professionals have long sounded the siren that healthcare is behind many other industries in implementing robust defenses. But ransomware threats shine a new light on cybersecurity inadequacies because the impact on patients is immediate, and the harm is much greater than something like a data breach.

It's time for both decision-makers and healthcare delivery professionals to comprehend the human benefits of cybersecurity and the human loss when it is absent or fails. Patients come to hospitals or clinics expecting treatment, often urgent. If the healthcare providers can't deliver those services because cybercriminals hijacked their systems, they're violating patient trust, as well as putting lives in danger. Considering the rapid growth of cyberattacks in the sector, life-altering scenarios like those we saw at UVMC will become common.

Investing in What Matters

Cybersecurity is not an easy problem to resolve in any sector, but even more so in healthcare. The complexities of the environment, with connected medical devices, multiple locations, and legacy systems, create many challenges. And it doesn't help that a typical healthcare organization has a minimal IT budget that is far from adequate for implementing effective cybersecurity solutions.

Leaving IT teams with few resources to defend against cyberattacks is no longer an option. While healthcare organizations allocate most of their funding to the delivery of care, they also need to realize that in today's environment, care delivery relies not only on medical equipment and personnel but also on strong cybersecurity defenses. If cybersecurity is a low priority, the delivery of care will suffer.

How can you compel decision-makers to view their responsibility through a new lens? Start by telling them the stories they need to hear. The [story about the mother](#) of two who was denied her lifesaving treatment. Or the nurse who compared working at a medical center in the grips of ransomware to working at a burn unit after the Boston Marathon bombing. Or the mother who blames a ransomware attack for the [death of her baby](#).

These are not scare tactics. They are the kind of messages that help translate cybersecurity risks into human impacts. If that doesn't compel the board of directors or other decision-makers to make investments into cybersecurity, what will?

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HEADLINE	06/16 Latin America govts. prime ransom targets?
SOURCE	https://www.cyberscoop.com/latin-america-ransomware-recorded-future/
GIST	<p>Some Latin American countries may present as easy targets for ransomware attackers due to a general deficit of cyber resources, specifically education, hygiene and overall infrastructure, an analysis from Recorded Future's Inskit Group said Thursday.</p> <p>The situation in many of these countries is such that ransomware attacks on local, provincial or federal government entities "could constitute a credible national and geopolitical security risk," the researchers conclude.</p> <p>A definitive attack vector could not be assessed in each case. But the "most likely" avenue in many of the cases was some combination of compromised valid credential pairs and session cookies, which are harvested from a successful infostealer infection and sold by initial access brokers on dark web forums, the researchers said.</p> <p>Anecdotal observations by Recorded Future reflect a "minor" but "sustained increase" in references to initial access sales and database leaks related to Latin American governments starting in around March 2022, the researchers note.</p> <p>"We have also identified a significant increase in Q1 2022, beginning in February 2022, of references to domains owned by government entities in [Latin America] on dark web shops and marketplaces such as Russian Market, Genesis Store, and 2easy Shop, relative to the same time period in 2021," they added, although further research and analysis is needed to determine whether there's a causal link between the increased references and actual ransomware attacks.</p> <p>The analysis notes the recent high-profile actions taken by the Costa Rican government after Conti, a prolific ransomware crew in the midst of rebranding, attacked the country beginning on April 17. The crew first demanded \$10 million, then the ransom doubled to \$20 million, with Conti posting messages urging the people of Costa Rica to march in the streets, overthrow the government, and demand the ransom be paid.</p> <p>The U.S. State Department announced a \$10 million reward for information on Conti leadership figures in the wake of the attack. Two days later Costa Rica made history by becoming the first country to declare a national emergency as a result of a ransomware attack.</p>

That attack was followed shortly after with the announcement from the crew that it was also connected to an attack on Peru's intelligence agency. "Have a nice day!" the May 7 announcement read, which included 9.41 gigabytes of data from the agency.

These were just two in a string of ransomware attacks across Central and South America between January and May 2022. Including the attacks in Costa Rica and Peru, ransomware attacks have been logged in Mexico, [Ecuador](#), Brazil and [Argentina](#). Ransomware crews such as ALPHV, LockBit 2.0 and BlackByte have been active in the region, the researcher note.

These attacks follow a rash of attacks in 2021, "a year in which Latin America has seen an explosion in ransomware attacks," [according to InSight Crime](#), a news organization focused on criminal activity in Latin America.

"Ransomware will likely continue to be incorporated into the attack methods of threat actors targeting public and private entities in [Latin America] due to their availability as ransomware-as-a-service (for non-technical threat actors) and highly successful infection rates," the researchers concluded. Latin America generally is an "up-and-coming region whose security posture is not as sophisticated or developed as some other regions for various reasons (geopolitical circumstances and developing infrastructure, among others)," and therefore "threat actors may view [Latin American] entities as easy targets for harvesting sensitive and financially lucrative accounts via infostealer infections."

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HEADLINE	06/16 Russia aggressive information war
SOURCE	https://www.cyberscoop.com/russia-information-war-ukraine-cyber-command-sorm/
GIST	<p>A top Ukrainian cybersecurity official said this week that the Russian campaign to wrest control over internet and phone networks in occupied Ukraine continues to grow, even as Russian forces intensify their shelling of telecommunications infrastructure.</p> <p>The Russian outlet The Moscow Times reported Thursday that in areas of eastern Ukraine that Russian troops are occupying, a telecommunications company run by + 7 Telecom — a likely subsidiary of the Russian telecom giant MTS — has replaced Ukrainian mobile services. The news outlet quoted Ukrainians complaining about the poor reception and internet censorship that accompanied the shift.</p> <p>"+ 7 Telecom's arrival on the scene replaced the Ukrainian telecom operators in occupied territory [and] there's a range of circumstantial evidence indicating the Russian telecom giant MTS is the ultimate beneficiary," said Gavin Wilde, a disinformation expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace who formerly served as a Russia director at the National Security Council. "As with so many schemes out of Moscow, third parties, cutouts and intermediaries obscure what otherwise seems self-evident: Russian power players have already begun carving up the information infrastructure in newly occupied Donbas."</p> <p>MTS is owned by an oligarch and its networks are linked to the Russian System for Operative Investigative Activities, or SORM, which the Russian government has long used surveil and silence dissenting voices inside Russia.</p> <p>Victor Zhora, a top Ukrainian cyber official, said Ukrainian ISPs were able to control the Internet in the occupied territories until about two weeks ago, when he said the Russians reconfigured networks and rerouted traffic through Crimea to Russia.</p> <p>"The destructive nature of these attacks is far less than of kinetic [active warfare], obviously, so we understand that the objective is to sow disinformation, to sow panic and instability," Zhora, deputy head of Ukraine's cybersecurity agency, the State Service of Special Communications Service (SSSCIP), said in an interview with CyberScoop.</p>

The situation is made more difficult because the Ukrainian network management center is under martial law, he added.

“We’ve got seven requests from local Kherson providers, in order to make them clarify what to do in this situation when they’re forced to reroute traffic and [whether] to let Russian invaders having access to these equipment, and our position is to avoid risk for their lives,” Zhora said.

Russian [troops stormed an internet service provider’s \(ISP\) offices in the Kherson region](#) last month, forcing the company’s executives onto Russian networks.

Cloudflare Radar, which monitors Internet trends, [reported on June 13 that Ukrainian provider Khersontelecom was routing traffic upstream through Russian-controlled digital service providers Miranda and Rostelecom](#). The SSSCIP has said that some 20% of Ukrainian telecom infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed since the war began, [according to Wired](#).

Thwarted by technology

A former senior leader of U.S. Cyber Command said the Russians are narrowing — or what he called ‘canalizing’ — the Ukrainians’ cyberspace and physical terrain simultaneously. Speaking at an American University Washington College of Law cybersecurity conference on Wednesday, Rear Adm. TJ White, who led Cyber Command’s cyber mission force until 2018 and Fleet Cyber Command after that, said the Russian focus on information operations has been unyielding.

But Russian information war objectives have been thwarted to a large degree by Elon Musk’s Starlink satellite internet constellation and by the fact that many Ukrainians have virtual private networks (VPNs), White said.

Last week Brig. Gen. Steve Butow, director of the space portfolio at the Defense Innovation Unit, [told Politico that Starlink “totally destroyed \[Russian President Vladimir\] Putin’s information campaign](#). He never, to this day, has been able to silence [Ukrainian President Volodymyr] Zelenskyy.”

About 150,000 Ukrainians use Starlink on a daily basis, [Mykhailo Fedorov, Ukraine’s digital minister, tweeted last month](#). Top10VPN, an organization that researches and ranks worldwide VPN usage said that between mid-February and late March [VPN usage in Ukraine surged by 609%](#).

Using telecom control to surveil, censor occupied Ukraine

Zhora said the Russian’s haven’t given up on the information war. Their propaganda is extensive and is customized region by region with a goal of beating down occupied Ukraine’s ability to resist the occupation, he said.

“It is to make people understand that they have been forgotten,” Zhora said. “The Ukrainian army is losing their last chance to return to normal life, so please get these Russian passports, continue collaborating, etc.”

Zhora said Russia has used both its SORM surveillance network and deep packet inspection (DPI) technology to surveil Ukrainians and censor their news diet. DPI is an advanced method of examining and managing network traffic.

Russia is desperate to control the Internet in Ukraine for several reasons, according to Andrei Soldatov, a nonresident senior fellow with the Center for European Policy Analysis think tank and a Russian investigative journalist who is the founder of a news organization aggressively covering the Russian secret services. (Russia placed Soldatov, [an expert on SORM](#) and [the larger Russian surveillance apparatus](#), on a [wanted list earlier this month](#) and froze his bank accounts).

Soldatov said that leveraging SORM’s snooping capabilities is doubtlessly a large motivator for the Russian effort to force Ukrainians onto Russian networks. He said such surveillance will give the Russians the political control they need and also will bolster the Russian military.

“They need a way to monitor and surveil traffic of Ukrainian civilians because these Ukrainians report Russian military troops’ movements to the Ukrainian army,” Soldatov said.

SORM is a powerful tool which functions like a wiretap, but Soldatov said it needs to be targeted to focus on specific individuals and does not work on a mass scale.

Like Zhora, Soldatov believes the Russians are using DPI to filter Ukrainians internet content. But he said filtering doesn’t work well from a distance, meaning Russia would have had to bring DPI technology into Ukraine — and Soldatov said Russia does not mass produce DPI devices.

“I suspect strongly that there might be some DPI equipment developed somewhere in the West or maybe in Israel, because this country (Israel) is extremely active at selling DPI devices to Russia, so maybe some sort of foreign made equipment might be found in occupied territories,” Soldatov said.

Limits to sowing disinformation

Disinformation scholars said that even with the benefit of a VPN or Starlink connection it seems clear that the average Ukrainian’s information flow is sharply attenuated. But Herb Lin, a disinformation scholar at Stanford University, said that most Ukrainians will be unmoved by the propaganda since the Russians can’t take away the country’s democratic legacy.

“One of the most important things to realize ... is Ukrainians will remember a time when they were not cut off,” Lin said.

Wilde said he believes the war has undermined Russia’s standing as an information warfare elite.

“Ukraine’s resilience to these [Russian information warfare] efforts ... raises questions in my mind about the core assumptions of [the Russian information warfare] doctrine, because in many ways, Russian information operations in Ukraine have galvanized the very institutions they were intended to degrade,” Wilde said. “If the objective, particularly since 2014, was to use cyber and information operations to strategically alter Ukraine’s geopolitical trajectory, it has proven a costly failure.”

Lessons for the U.S.

Even with the mixed results of Russia’s information operations in Ukraine, White suggested such operations are central components of effective cyberwarfare — more than the U.S. appears to realize.

“If I was to offer a criticism of the DOD today ... I would say we haven’t decided yet what is or isn’t information operations, information warfare, cyberspace operations, operations in cyberspace that enable information operations,” said White, who led the Cyber Mission Force at Cyber Command until 2018. “Is it about spectrum, is it about IP [internet protocol] space, OT [operational technology] space, is it about cognitive operations, beliefs and understanding and motivations for operations? ... We just haven’t yet decided.”

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HEADLINE	06/16 More patients in Eye Care Leaders breach
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/ransomware/another-1-3m-patients-added-to-data-breach-tally-of-ransomware-attack-on-eye-care-leaders
GIST	<p>Approximately 1.29 million patients of Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center have been added to the ongoing fallout from the Eye Care Leaders ransomware attack and data theft from December 2021.</p> <p>ECL is a cloud-based, ophthalmology-specific electronic health record (EHR) and practice management vendor based in North Carolina.</p>

Added to the Department of Health and Human Services breach reporting tool Wednesday night, the massive TTUHSC tally makes it the hardest-hit provider by [the ECL breach](#). A total of 58,642 Precision Eye Care patients and 23,993 Harkins Eye Clinic patients were added to the tally Wednesday, as well.

The TTUHSC notice shows the ECL incident compromised a range of patient data, including names, driver's licenses, emails, genders, dates of birth, medical record numbers, health insurance details, appointment information, Social Security numbers, and medical data tied to services received at the TTUHSC ophthalmology center.

Over the last few weeks, covered entities have released breach notices detailing the ECL "data security incident." An attacker accessed the EMR platform and its data, tied to a range of healthcare clients. During the dwell time, the actor deleted databases and system configuration files.

Upon discovering the hack, ECL shut down the EMR platform and launched an investigation, which could not conclusively rule out access to patient health data.

So far, at least 20 covered entities have issued notices tied to the ECL ransomware attack, including:

- EvergreenHealth (20,533)
- Allied Eye Physicians & Surgeons (20,651)
- Summit Eye Associates (53,818)
- Affiliated Eye Surgeons (23,400)
- Northern Eye Care Associates (8,000)
- Regional Eye Associates, Inc. & Surgical Eye Center of Morgantown (194,035)
- Frank Eye Center (26,333)
- Ad Astra Eye (3,684)
- Moyes Eye Center (38,000)
- Finkelstein Eye Associates (48,587)
- Sylvester Eye Care (19,377)
- Shoreline Eye Group (57,047)
- AU Health (50,631)
- Associated Ophthalmologists of Kansas City (13,461)
- Fishman Vision (2,646)
- Burman & Zuckerbrod Ophthalmology Associates (1,337)
- McCoy Vision Center (33,930)
- Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (1.29 million)
- Precision Eye Care (58,462)
- Harkins Eye Clinic (23,993)

For the majority of the providers, the compromised data was limited to patient names, SSNs, dates of birth, medical record numbers, health insurance details, and treatment information.

A total of 1,987,925 patients have been included in the breached data thus far, putting the ECL incident on pace to become the largest healthcare data breach in 2022. The singular incident is severe enough on its own, but combined with the allegations in a [provider-led lawsuit](#), the vendor has had a tumultuous year of security issues.

Although ECL has not confirmed or denied the allegations, several providers have accused ECL of concealing multiple ransomware attacks and prolonged periods of EMR downtime throughout the year that were not tied to the December incident. [SC Media previously connected](#) the dots on all of the allegations in an in-depth report.

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HEADLINE	06/16 Ransomware groups leak preferences
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/ransomware/what-data-will-get-leaked-it-depends-on-the-ransomware-group

GIST	<p>Different ransomware groups show distinct preferences for what data to leak, according to a Rapid7 study of two years of extortion leak sites.</p> <p>"It seems to be very deliberate," said Erick Galinkin, principal AI researcher at Rapid7 and author of the report.</p> <p>Conti leaked financial information in its first dump of data in 81% of attacks, according to the report, where Cl0p only leaked it in 30%. Cl0p leaked employee personal information in 70% of its first leaks, where Conti only leaked it in 27%. And REvil seemed to be down the middle, releasing each about half the time.</p> <p>The release of client data and marketing information also varied.</p> <p>REvil was the most likely for both (customer or patient data in 55% of first leaks, marketing data in 48%), followed by Conti (42% and 46%) and Cl0p (30% and 30%).</p> <p>The Cl0p information was based on a more limited number of events and is more likely to vary — a few attacks waged differently and it could have the most of either — though more thorough changes would need to take place to change its relative position on PII and financial information.</p> <p>Galinkin noted a few caveats: Leaks often carry more than one type of information, and actors are sometimes limited by the data they have access to rather than by their ideal strategy. If Conti cannot find financial information, it likely is not going to give up an attack.</p> <p>Different types of information create different pressures on a company. Leaked personal information, either of employees or clients, can create arduous notification requirements, anger among an important group, and risk of class action lawsuits. Financial information creates pressure from investors and the potential embarrassment of business information coming out a company intended to keep secret.</p> <p>While the attacks rarely disclosed intellectual property, that may have more to do with the industries most likely to be targeted than the whims of the actor. A healthcare clinic or school district is not likely to have much intellectual property to lose, noted Galinkin. But of 14 attacks on pharmaceutical companies, six leaked IP in the first data dump.</p> <p>Over time many ransomware attacks have conformed to a narrow set of breach and movement strategies as affiliates learn what works and what does not. Galinkin is uncertain if a first choice of data to leak strategy will ever become standard across groups.</p> <p>"I don't I don't know what would cause that," he said. "Because as it stands, a lot of people are paying ransoms. So it would have to be a significant enough number of people choosing not to pay ransoms after that initial disclosure layer that they would think 'We got to try something different because, you know, these folks are being successful and we're not.'"</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Phishing toolkit on cybercrime forums
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/nakedpages-phishing-toolkit/
GIST	<p>Cybersecurity researchers at CloudSEK have spotted a new and sophisticated phishing toolkit for sale across several cybercrime forums and Telegram channels</p> <p>Dubbed “NakedPages,” the toolkit, which was developed using NodeJS Framework and runs JavaScript code, is fully automated and comes preloaded with more than 50 phishing templates and site projects.</p> <p>“Naked Pages is the phishing tool any serious developer//spammer needs with more features than any other reverse proxy combined or PHP phishing framework combined,” reads a post on a cybercrime forum, which was viewed by CloudSEK.</p>

Return to Top	<p>The post also mentions that there is a possibility of providing software licenses upon payment of \$1000 and contributing to the development of the open-source project on GitHub, with interested parties being able to contact the actor via a Google Forms page.</p> <p>According to an advisory by CloudSEK, NakedPages is designed to work on Linux and asks for read, write and execute permissions from the 'user' and further requests for read and execute permissions from both 'group' and 'others' in order to work.</p> <p>Moreover, the toolkit also reportedly features fully-integrated and battle-based anti-bot functionalities, capable of detecting bots of different types from over 120 countries.</p> <p>"[NakedPages] would equip malicious actors with the details required to launch sophisticated ransomware attacks."</p> <p>In terms of the threat actor behind the new phishing toolkit, CloudSEK said it is a new user on GitHub and the cybercrime forum, with both accounts being less than a month old.</p> <p>"There have been no concrete samples shared by the threat actor. Repeated attempts for establishing contact were made by our source, but the threat actor hasn't responded," CloudSEK wrote.</p> <p>The researchers also warned individuals who may be affected by NakedPages to monitor for anomalies in user accounts and systems that could be indicators of possible account takeovers and implement multi-factor authentication (MFA) practices across all accounts.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 IE retired but still an attacker target
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/vulnerabilities-threats/internet-explorer-will-likely-remain-an-attacker-target-for-some-time
GIST	<p>Microsoft's official end-of-support for the Internet Explorer 11 desktop application on June 15 relegated to history a browser that's been around for almost 27 years. Even so, IE still likely will provide a juicy target for attackers.</p> <p>That's because some organizations are still using Internet Explorer (IE) despite Microsoft's long-known plans to deprecate the technology. Microsoft meanwhile has retained the MSHTML (aka Trident) IE browser engine as part of Windows 11 until 2029, allowing organizations to run in IE mode while they transition to the Microsoft Edge browser. In other words, IE isn't dead just yet, nor are threats to it.</p> <p>Though IE has a negligible share of the browser market worldwide these days (0.52%), many enterprises still run it or have legacy applications tied to IE. This appears to be the case in countries such as Japan and Korea. Stories in Nikkei Asia and Japan Times this week quoted a survey by Keyman's Net showing that nearly 49% of 350 Japanese companies surveyed are still using IE. Another report in South Korea's MBN pointed to several large organizations still running IE.</p> <p>"Internet Explorer has been around for over 20 years and many companies have invested in using it for many things beyond just Web browsing," says Todd Schell, senior product manager at Ivanti. There are still enterprise applications tied closely to IE that often are running older, customized scripts on their website or have apps that may require older scripts. "For example, companies may have built extensive scripts that generate and then display reports in IE. They have not invested in updating them to use HTML 5 for Edge or other modern browsers."</p> <p>Such organizations face the sort of security issues associated with every other software technology that is no longer supported. Running IE 11 as a standalone app past its end of support date means that previously unknown — or worse yet, known but unpatched — vulnerabilities can be exploited going forward, Schell says.</p>

"This is true for any application or operating system but has historically been an even bigger issue for browsers, which have such widespread use," Schell says. It's hard to say how many organizations worldwide are presently stuck using a technology that is no longer supported because they did not migrate away sooner. But judging by the fact that Microsoft will continue to support compatibility mode in Edge until 2029, IE likely remains in widespread use, he notes.

Any organization that hasn't already should prioritize moving away from IE because of the security implications, says Claire Tills, senior research engineer at Tenable. "The end of support means that new vulnerabilities will not get security patches if they don't meet a certain criticality threshold and, even in those rare cases, those updates will only be available to customers who have paid for Extended Security Updates," she says.

Bugs Still Abound

Microsoft Edge has now officially replaced the Internet Explorer 11 desktop app on Windows 10. But the fact that the MSHTML engine will exist as part of the Windows operating system through 2029 means organizations are at risk of vulnerabilities in the browser engine — even if they are no longer using IE.

According to Maddie Stone, security researcher at Google's Project Zero bug hunting team, IE has had a fair number of zero-day bugs over the past years, even as its use shrank. Last year, for example, the Project Zero team [tracked four zero-days in IE](#) — the most since 2016, when the same number of zero-days were discovered in the browser. Three of the four zero-day vulnerabilities last year ([CVE-2021-26411](#), [CVE-2021-33742](#), and [CVE-2021-40444](#)) targeted MSHTML and were exploited via methods other than the Web, Stone says.

"It's not clear to me how Microsoft may or may not lock down access to MSHTML in the future," Stone says. "But if the access stays as it is now it means that attackers can exploit vulnerabilities in MSHTML through routes such as Office documents and other file types as we saw last year" with the three MSHTML zero-days, she says. The number of zero-day exploits detected in the wild targeting IE components has been pretty consistent from 2015 to 2021 and suggests that the browser remains a popular target for attackers, Stone says.

Tenable's Tills notes that one of the more widely exploited vulnerabilities in a Microsoft product in 2021 was in fact CVE-2021-40444, a remote code execution zero day in MSHTML. The vulnerability was exploited extensively in phishing attacks by everything from ransomware-as-a-service operators to advanced persistent threat groups.

"Given that Microsoft will continue to support MSHTML, organizations should examine the mitigations for vulnerabilities like CVE-2021-40444 and determine which they can adopt long term to reduce the risk of future vulnerabilities," Tills notes.

The Usual Mitigations

Microsoft was not available as of this post to comment on the issue of potential risk for organizations from attacks targeting MSHTML. But Ivanti's Schell says it is reasonable to assume that Microsoft has provided proper security and sandboxing around MSHTML when running in IE compatibility mode. He says Microsoft can monitor and provide any needed updates to MSHTML since it is a supported product and feature. The best mitigation, as always, is for organizations to keep their software, OS, and browser updated and ensure antiviral and malware detection mechanisms are up-to-date as well.

"MSHTML is now just one of many libraries that we have in Windows 11," says Johannes Ullrich, dean of research at the SANS Institute. "Of course, it is a complex one, and one that still has a significant but somewhat reduced attack surface," he notes. So, the best mitigation for organizations is to keep patching Windows when updates become available, he says.

"IE is still popular enough to be a worthwhile target" for attackers, Ullrich adds.

	Even so, the continuing number of zero-days being discovered in IE doesn't necessarily mean that attackers have suddenly intensified their interest in attacking it. "It may just be that it was easier to find vulnerabilities using newer tools in the old IE codebase," Ullrich says.
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HEADLINE	06/16 Android spyware 'Hermit' targeted attacks
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/mobile/android-spyware-hermit-discovered-in-targeted-attacks
GIST	<p>Researchers have discovered an enterprise-grade Android family of modular spyware dubbed Hermit conducting surveillance on citizens of Kazakhstan by their government.</p> <p>Lookout Threat Lab researchers - who spotted the spyware - surmise that the secretive Italian spyware vendor RCS Lab developed it and say Hermit was previously deployed by Italian authorities in a 2019 anti-corruption operation in Italy. The spyware also was found in northeastern Syria, home to the country's Kurdish majority and a site of ongoing crises, including the Syrian civil war.</p> <p>Android devices have been abused with spyware in the past; Sophos researchers uncovered new variants of Android spyware linked to a Middle Eastern APT group back in November 2021. More recent analysis from Google TAG indicates at least eight governments from across the globe are buying Android zero-day exploits for covert surveillance purposes.</p> <p>Mike Parkin, senior technical engineer at Vulcan Cyber, says spyware is a tool used by many actors worldwide, including criminal organizations, state or state-sponsored threat actors, national security, and law-enforcement organizations following their own mandates.</p> <p>"Regardless of who is using it or what agenda they are working toward, these commercial- grade spyware tools can seriously threaten people's personal privacy," he says.</p> <p>The highest profile spyware case in recent memory was the discovery of Pegasus, a legal surveillance software developed by Israeli company NSO Group. The news caused an international furor after it was found covertly installed on iOS and Android mobile phones belonging to human rights activists, journalists, and high-ranking members of governments.</p> <p>How Hermit Works</p> <p>Hermit first gets installed on a targeted device as a framework with minimal surveillance capability. Then it can download modules from a command-and-control (C2) server as instructed and activate the spying functionality built into these modules.</p> <p>This modular approach masks the malware from automated analysis of the app and makes manual malware analysis significantly harder. In addition, it allows the malicious actor to enable and disable different functionalities in their surveillance campaign or the capabilities of a target device. Hermit can also alter its behavior as needed to evade analysis tools and processes.</p> <p>"The modular design might also be part of the business model of the software vendor, allowing them to sell individual spying features as value-add line items," explains Paul Shunk, security researcher at Lookout, which published a report on Hermit today.</p> <p>Shunk says the overall design and code quality of the malware stands out compared with many other samples he has seen.</p> <p>"It was clear this was professionally developed by creators with an understanding of software engineering best practices," he says. "Beyond that, it is not very often we come across malware [that] assumes it will be able to successfully exploit a device and make use of elevated root permissions."</p> <p>The discovery of Hermit adds another puzzle piece to the picture of the secretive market for "lawful intercept" surveillance tools, he says.</p>

"As in the cases of NSO, Cytrox, and other vendors, discovery of their customers usually exposes their claim that their product is only used for legitimate purposes as at least partially untrue," Shunk says. One of the Hermit samples Lookout analyzed used a Kazakh language website as its decoy.

And the main C2 server used by the app was just a proxy, with the real C2 being hosted on an IP from Kazakhstan.

"The combination of the targeting of Kazakh-speaking users and the location of the back-end C2 server is a strong indication that the campaign is controlled by an entity in Kazakhstan," Shunk says.

Lookout says an Apple iOS version of the spyware exists as well, but the research team was unable to obtain a sample to analyze.

'MaliBot' Targets Online Banking

Meanwhile, another Android-based malware family reared its head this week in the form of Malibot, which is targeting online banking customers in Spain and Italy with the capability to steal credentials and crypto wallets. The malware was discovered by F5 Labs while the security company was tracking the mobile banking Trojan FluBot.

The malware consists of two campaigns: Mining X, which presents a QR code that leads to the malware Android Package Kit, and TheCryptoApp, which attempts to dupe users into downloading a fake version of the popular cryptocurrency tracker app available on the Google Play Store.

It's also able to steal or bypass multifactor authentication codes and trick victims into downloading the malware either via a direct SMS phishing message or via fake websites they're lured to.

"This is certainly one to pay attention to and F5 expects to see a broader range of targets as time goes on, especially given the versatility of the malware could, in principle, be used for a wider range of attacks than stealing credentials and cryptocurrency," F5 warns in a [blog post](#).

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HEADLINE	06/16 Australia border force broad search powers
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/n7zwex/australian-border-force-has-searched-more-than-40000-mobile-devices-in-5-years
GIST	<p>Australian Border Force officers have sifted through the contents of more than 40,000 mobile devices at the border without a warrant over the last five years, new data has revealed.</p> <p>On Thursday, the Australian tech news site ITNews revealed that border force officers had undertaken more than 41,410 warrantless device searches between 2017 and 2021, under a broad set of search powers that allow officers to search a traveller's phone for any number of reasons.</p> <p>Those same powers enable the agency to copy data from a mobile device seized as part of a search undertaken at the Australian border, and even hold the device for a period of up to 14 days.</p> <p>The practice is totally legal in Australia under the Customs Act, and doesn't require officers to notify a targeted traveller of their rights, which more often than not empower them to politely decline a search.</p> <p>"There are many instances under which we may examine a traveller's device," a spokesperson for the Australian Border Force said. "For example, visa-related issues, counter-terrorism and prohibited items."</p> <p>Answering questions in the Senate earlier this year, a Border Force spokesperson said there is no "legal compulsion" for travellers to comply with the searches, but that refusing to do so could see a border agent consider them a "risk to the border" and hold the suspected device for even longer.</p>

At the time, Greens Senate whip Nick McKim—then the party’s digital rights spokesperson—said the agency should be required to get a warrant before searching people’s devices, as is the case for other law enforcement agencies around the country.

“It’s generally the requirement in Australia, and it should be no different at the border,” McKim said.

“Australia’s privacy protections need considerable strengthening so people’s phones aren’t examined on a hunch, or confiscated under the shadow of being referred to other authorities,” he said.

The data, obtained under Australia’s Freedom of Information Act, shows that only the searches conducted between May 2020 and the end of last year noted what type of device was searched at the border.

As such, mobile phone searches only came to account for 951 of the total searches disclosed, and took place over that same period. The remaining 40,459 searches undertaken through the full five-year period could have been for scores of different device types, including phones, but also computers and portable hard drives.

The dataset does not account for searches or seizures where a traveller refused to handover their password to a border official. In theory, this number could be relatively low, given that most travellers wouldn’t be aware that they can turn down an official’s request.

According to a procedural [instruction manual](#) for border officers, obtained by the [Guardian](#), border force agents have “limited” powers to query the content on a traveller’s phone, and “must not suggest” that people questioned by them are “compelled to respond”.

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HEADLINE	06/16 China Covid app used to block protesters?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/16/business/china-code-protesters.html
GIST	<p>Since the pandemic’s early days, China has used mobile apps to identify and isolate people who might be spreading COVID. Now, a central Chinese city may have shown a far more troubling use of that data: stopping would-be protesters.</p> <p>Dozens of people from across China had set off for the city of Zhengzhou days ago to protest the freezing of their savings amid an investigation into several regional banks. But when they arrived in the city, many found that the so-called health codes on their phones had turned from green — meaning good — to red, a designation that would prevent them from moving freely.</p> <p>Tom Zhang, the owner of a textile business in the eastern province of Zhejiang, said that this happened to him when he was on a train headed to Zhengzhou on Sunday, despite coming from a town where there had been no COVID cases. Upon arriving in the city, Zhang said, he was stopped by police and told his red code — usually suggesting an infection or close contact — indicated he posed a public health risk. He said the Zhengzhou police held him in a local library for around 12 hours.</p> <p>“The red code was definitely used to limit us depositors,” Zhang said in a phone interview. “It was a complete absurdity.”</p> <p>Zhang was part of a group of hundreds of depositors in several rural banks who had planned to lodge a complaint with the Henan province bank regulator on Monday after having been unable to withdraw their money for months. (Zhang said his account held about \$440,000 in savings.) Several other people from this group also told The New York Times that their health codes had changed while they were en route to Zhengzhou.</p> <p>Many of the petitioners posted their red health codes on Chinese social media sites, suggesting that the inexplicable change was no coincidence. Their complaints quickly fueled widespread outrage and prompted a slew of questions, even drawing an unusual rebuke from establishment commentators, who asked if local authorities had abused their power.</p>

	<p>Hu Xijin, a former editor of the ruling Communist Party's Global Times newspaper, warned that the use of the health code for purposes other than epidemic control "damages the authority" of the monitoring system and would chip away at the public's support for it. His post on Weibo, a Twitter-like social media platform, on Monday became a hashtag that was among the most-searched earlier this week, drawing 280 million views.</p> <p>"Health code can't be abused," China Comment, a monthly magazine managed by the official Xinhua News Agency, wrote in a commentary. The magazine said Henan authorities had to explain how the codes changed, whose decision it was to use the codes this way, and what procedures were followed. It also said standards should be strengthened for the use of health codes to guard against their abuse by "willful power."</p> <p>A worker with the Zhengzhou government hotline for collecting residents' complaints told The Times that the hotline had received many complaints about the abnormal red code and that authorities were looking into the claims. The Henan Provincial Health Commission told Chinese media that it is investigating the complaints from the depositors about their red codes.</p> <p>While he was being held by the police, Zhang said, employees from the bank regulator told him the investigation into the banks could take two years. With little option for recourse, Zhang said he agreed when police officers from his hometown arrived and offered to escort him out of Henan.</p> <p>As he was making his way to the airport, his health code suddenly turned green.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Unusual breach Oregon luxury destination
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/prominent-oregon-resort-hit-by-unusual-cyberattack-guests-names-exposed/
GIST	<p>One of Oregon's most prominent luxury destinations has been victimized by an unusual cyberattack, with hackers posting employee information and a ledger of guests online in an apparent attempt to compel the hotel to pay a ransom.</p> <p>"It's not a new strategy. It's just the way they are implementing it that is new ... by putting it on the public internet in an easily searchable form," said Brett Callow, a threat analyst for New Zealand cybersecurity firm Emsisoft. "As far as I'm aware this hasn't been done before."</p> <p>Hackers apparently breached The Allison Inn & Spa in Newberg, demanding that the property negotiate to keep employee and guest records confidential. The cybercriminals claim to have information on 1,500 current or former employees and 2,500 reservation records from 2022.</p> <p>The Allison management could not be reached for comment. The attack has attracted the attention of online researchers and national cybersecurity publications because of the hackers' unusual approach.</p> <p>Typically, cybercriminals publish any stolen data on the "dark web," a portion of the internet that requires special browsers to access and doesn't typically show up in online searches.</p> <p>In this case, the hackers published the data on a public website, findable through a simple Google search. The site purports to list dates of guests' stays, as well as employees' birthdays, phone numbers and Social Security numbers.</p> <p>Callow said the attack appears to be a kind of experiment by the hackers as they seek tactics to force their victims to pay ransomware. If it succeeds, he warned the tactic may become commonplace and private information may be more readily available online.</p>

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HEADLINE	06/16 California state bar association data leak
SOURCE	https://news.bloomberglaw.com/litigation/confidential-record-leak-leaves-calbar-lawyers-clients-exposed
GIST	<p>California’s state bar association, which is responsible for licensing and regulating more than 250,000 lawyers in the most populous US state, is itself under scrutiny for a data leak that allowed confidential client complaint and attorney disciplinary record data to be captured by a free court records website.</p> <p>As many as 322,500 such documents were vacuumed up by JudyRecords.com between October 2021 and February 2022, according to a proposed class action filed against the California bar by two lawyers, a former judge, and three people with attorney grievances, all of whom are proceeding anonymously.</p> <p>When a state bar experiences a data breach, confidential information stored in disciplinary files could be a target, and releasing those files could potentially lead to doxing, extortion, or identity theft, as well as to litigation against the bar, according to attorneys who spoke to Bloomberg Law about the matter.</p> <p>Accusing the State Bar of California of invasion of privacy, negligence, and violation of the state’s Information Practices Act, those suing it are seeking money damages and injunctive relief. Also named as defendants in the case are the vendor that supplied the CalBar case management software and bar’s interim information technology director.</p> <p>The Bar has since moved for dismissal, arguing among other things that the Information Practices Act doesn’t apply to it. It also maintains that JudyRecords.com captured “only Docket Data, not complaints or other case documents from underlying disciplinary proceedings.”</p> <p>But just months after the California incursion, the State Bar of Georgia’s website was limited in response to unauthorized access. The Georgia Bar announced May 20 that it had a new temporary website and that it was continuing to “work through” the unauthorized access to its site.</p> <p>Breach of disciplinary files is a “nightmare scenario” in terms of confidential information, and the possible negative implications could go “well beyond” a traditional data breach, said Fredric D. Bellamy, a member of Dickinson Wright PLLC with experience in data privacy and cybersecurity law.</p> <p>“How badly this trend accelerates could depend on whether the hackers were able to steal data from the bars that have already been attacked that can be sold on the black market,” he told Bloomberg Law. “That kind of financial success would encourage more hackers to target bar organizations.”</p> <p>Sensitive Data</p>

Responsibility for attorney registration and discipline varies from state to state. In some places, such as New York, the courts handle that responsibility, while in others, such as California, it's the state bar, and in Illinois, it's the Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Committee.

Regardless of where they are stored, those disciplinary files likely include sensitive client data, including banking and financial information, social security numbers, medical records, and disclosures lawyers were likely required to turn over in the course of an investigation, said [Maryam Meseha](#), a partner in FisherBroyles LLP's growing Cyber-Risk, Privacy & Data Security practice group.

While cyber attackers' motives are often unclear just after a breach, it's known that some individuals want to gain access to confidential attorney disciplinary files or client information, as was the case in California, according to [David Opderbeck](#), a professor of law and co-director of the Institute for Privacy Protection at Seton Hall Law.

The legal profession has a "strong interest in assuring the public that their personal information will not be publicly disclosed if it is not otherwise available in a public court or tribunal's public docket," Opderbeck told Bloomberg Law.

It is "hard to imagine" how an attorney who submitted that confidential information to the state bar could be held responsible for a bar's data breach, but the issues are not so clear cut for the organizations, Meseha said.

Liability

Litigation surrounding leaked information and/or breaches usually hinge on plaintiffs' proof that actual misuse of that information has occurred, which ultimately led to a tangible harm, Meseha said. It will be up to the fact finder in this case to determine whether there was reputational harm, as alleged in the complaint, and whether that harm meets the legal standard of each cause of action.

For a California litigant claiming invasion of privacy, that means proving both a reasonable expectation of privacy and that the release of information would be highly offensive to a reasonable person.

"That's a pretty high bar to jump over," Meseha said. "Damages, of course, are an entirely separate issue. How much is your reputation worth? It depends."

Meseha said she doubted a resultant judgment would bankrupt the California bar. "They likely have robust insurance coverage policies that are covering this," she said. "The damages finding would have to be well over the coverage limits to pose any real threat to the CA Bar's financial footing."

Opderbeck countered it's "conceivable that a particularly egregious breach of PII from a State Bar data base could result in the kind of liability that might threaten the viability of the organization."

"But such a catastrophic liability might be unlikely because there are enormous questions about the legal theory of harm, causation, and how to measure damages," the professor told Bloomberg Law via email. "Still, like any other organization that handles PII, a State Bar should have a comprehensive cyber risk management policy in place."

He added, "Outside the context of attorney discipline, the activities of most state bar associations are pretty boring from a hacker's perspective."

What's at Stake

In a state such as New York, where attorney regulation, admissions, and discipline are handled through the court system and not through the bar, hacks into the state bar association system would "have no impact upon attorneys who are being investigated or have been disciplined for ethical violations," according to [Chris McDonough](#), a special counsel to Foley Griffin LLP who frequently represents lawyers facing grievances or disciplinary proceedings in New York.

	<p>McDonough said that, if there were a breach of disciplinary files, bank account info could be jeopardized. That is because a “large majority of complaints” that result in sanctions are based upon errors in managing escrow accounts, and those files would likely include unredacted bank records submitted by the attorney, he said.</p> <p>“The acquisition of these bank account numbers, and other details could lead to significant fraudulent activities that would harm both the lawyers and their clients for whom they’re holding escrow,” he told Bloomberg Law.</p> <p>Seton Hall’s Opderbeck emphasized the risk to confidentiality, which he said relates to the heart of the attorney-client relationship.</p> <p>“Clients must know that they are free to tell their attorneys the truth without fear of public disclosure absent the client’s authorization to make a disclosure (for example, in a public court docket),” he said. “And clients who have complaints about their attorneys’ conduct likewise should know that there are at least some aspects of the attorney disciplinary process that do not require full disclosure of the confidences previously exchanged between the attorney and client.”</p> <p>The California State Bar declined to comment on its privacy duties under state law, citing ongoing litigation. Its motion to dismiss is scheduled to be argued on Aug. 8.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 India police linked to illicit hacking
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/modified-elephant-planted-evidence-hacking-police/
GIST	<p>POLICE FORCES AROUND the world have increasingly used hacking tools to identify and track protesters, expose political dissidents’ secrets, and turn activists’ computers and phones into inescapable eavesdropping bugs. Now, new clues in a case in India connect law enforcement to a hacking campaign that used those tools to go an appalling step further: planting false incriminating files on targets’ computers that the same police then used as grounds to arrest and jail them.</p> <p>More than a year ago, forensic analysts revealed that unidentified hackers fabricated evidence on the computers of at least two activists arrested in Pune, India, in 2018, both of whom have languished in jail and, along with 13 others, face terrorism charges. Researchers at security firm SentinelOne and nonprofits Citizen Lab and Amnesty International have since linked that evidence fabrication to a broader hacking operation that targeted hundreds of individuals over nearly a decade, using phishing emails to infect targeted computers with spyware, as well as smartphone hacking tools sold by the Israeli hacking contractor NSO Group. But only now have SentinelOne’s researchers revealed ties between the hackers and a government entity: none other than the very same Indian police agency in the city of Pune that arrested multiple activists based on the fabricated evidence.</p> <p>“There’s a provable connection between the individuals who arrested these folks and the individuals who planted the evidence,” says Juan Andres Guerrero-Saade, a security researcher at SentinelOne who, along with fellow researcher Tom Hegel, will present findings at the Black Hat security conference in August. “This is beyond ethically compromised. It is beyond callous. So we’re trying to put as much data forward as we can in the hopes of helping these victims.”</p> <p>SentinelOne’s new findings that link the Pune City Police to the long-running hacking campaign, which the company has called Modified Elephant, center on two particular targets of the campaign: Rona Wilson and Varvara Rao. Both men are activists and human rights defenders who were jailed in 2018 as part of a group called the Bhima Koregaon 16, named for the village where violence between Hindus and Dalits—the group once known as “untouchables”—broke out earlier that year. (One of those 16 defendants, 84-year-old Jesuit priest Stan Swamy, died in jail last year after contracting Covid-19. Rao, who is 81 years old and in poor health, has been released on medical bail, which expires next month. Of the other 14, only one has been granted bail.)</p>

Early last year, Arsenal Consulting, a digital forensics firm working on behalf of the defendants, analyzed the contents of Wilson's laptop, along with that of another defendant, human rights lawyer Surendra Gadling. Arsenal analysts found that evidence had clearly been fabricated on both machines. In Wilson's case, a piece of malware known as NetWire had added 32 files to a folder of the computer's hard drive, including a letter in which Wilson appeared to be conspiring with a banned Maoist group to assassinate Indian prime minister Narendra Modi. The letter was, in fact, created with a version of Microsoft Word that Wilson had never used, and that had never even been installed on his computer. Arsenal also found that Wilson's computer had been hacked to install the NetWire malware after he opened an attachment sent from Varvara Rao's email account, which had itself been compromised by the same hackers. "This is one of the most serious cases involving evidence-tampering that Arsenal has ever encountered," Arsenal's president, Mark Spencer, wrote in his report to the Indian court.

In February, SentinelOne published a [detailed report on Modified Elephant](#), analyzing the malware and server infrastructure used in the hacking campaign to show that the two cases of evidence fabrication Arsenal had analyzed were part of a much larger pattern: The hackers had targeted hundreds of activists, journalists, academics, and lawyers with phishing emails and malware since as early as 2012. But in that report, SentinelOne stopped short of identifying any individual or organization behind the Modified Elephant hackers, writing only that the "activity aligns sharply with Indian state interests."

Now the researchers have gone further in nailing down the group's affiliations. Working with a security analyst at a certain email provider—who also spoke to WIRED but asked that neither they nor their employer be named—SentinelOne learned that three of the victim email accounts compromised by the hackers in 2018 and 2019 had a recovery email address and phone number added as a backup mechanism. For those accounts, which belonged to Wilson, Rao, and an activist and professor at Delhi University named Hany Babu, the addition of a new recovery email and phone number appears to have been intended to allow the hacker to easily regain control of the accounts if their passwords were changed. To the researchers' surprise, that recovery email on all three accounts included the full name of a police official in Pune who was closely involved in the Bhima Koregaon 16 case.

The three hacked accounts have other fingerprints that link them—and thus the Pune police—to the larger Modified Elephant hacking campaign: The email provider found that the hacked accounts were accessed from IP addresses that SentinelOne and Amnesty International had previously identified as those of Modified Elephant. In the case of Rona Wilson, the email provider security analyst says that Wilson's email account received a phishing email in April 2018 and then appeared to be compromised by the hackers using those IPs, and at the same time the email and phone number linked to the Pune City Police were added as recovery contacts to the account. The analyst says Wilson's email account was then itself used to send out other phishing emails to targets in the Bhima Koregaon case for at least two months before Wilson was arrested in June of 2018.

"We generally don't tell people who targeted them, but I'm kind of tired of watching shit burn," the security analyst at the email provider told WIRED of their decision to reveal the identifying evidence from the hacked accounts. "These guys are not going after terrorists. They're going after human rights defenders and journalists. And it's not right."

To further confirm the link between the recovery email and phone number on the hacked accounts and the Pune City Police, WIRED turned to John Scott-Railton, a security researcher at the University of Toronto's Citizen Lab, who along with others at Amnesty International had [earlier revealed the extent of the hacking campaign against the Bhima Koregaon 16](#) and shown that the NSO hacking tool Pegasus had been used to target some of their smartphones. To prove that the Pune City Police controlled the recovery contacts on the hacked accounts, Scott-Railton dug up entries in open source databases of Indian mobile phone numbers and emails for the recovery phone number that linked it to an email address ending in pune@ic.in, a suffix for other email addresses used by police in Pune. Scott-Railton found that the number is also linked in the database to the recovery email address connected to the hacked accounts for the same Pune police official.

Separately, security researcher Zeshan Aziz found the recovery email address and phone number tied to the Pune police official's name in the leaked database of TrueCaller, a caller ID and call-blocking app, and found the phone number linked to his name in the leaked database of iimjobs.com, an Indian job recruitment website. Finally, Aziz found the recovery phone number listed with the official's name on multiple archived web directories for Indian police, including on the website of the Pune City Police.

(WIRED also verified that at the time the accounts were compromised, the email provider would have sent a confirmation link or text message to any recovery contact information added to an email account, which suggests that the police did, in fact, control that email address and phone number.)

Scott-Railton further found that the WhatsApp profile photo for the recovery phone number added to the hacked accounts displays a selfie photo of the police official—a man who appears to be the same officer at police press conferences and even in one news photograph taken at the arrest of Varvara Rao.

WIRED reached out in multiple emails and phone calls to the Pune City Police and the Pune police official whose personal details were linked to the hacked accounts and received no reply.

One Mumbai-based defense attorney representing several of the Bhima Koregaon 16, Mihir Desai, says he would need to independently corroborate the new evidence of the Pune police's links to the hacking campaign. But taken at face value, he says, it appears "very damning." He adds that he is hopeful it could help his clients, including Anand Teltumbde, who has been accused of terrorist connections based in part on an apparently fabricated document found on Rona Wilson's computer. "We've known things have been planted, but the police could have always said, 'we are not involved in all this,'" says Desai. "By showing the police did this, it would mean there was a conspiracy to arrest these people. It would show the police have acted in a vicious and deliberate manner knowing fully well this was false evidence."

The conclusion that Pune police are tied to a hacking campaign that appears to have framed and jailed human rights activists presents a disturbing new example of the dangers of hacking tools in the hands of law enforcement—even in an ostensible democracy like India. SentinelOne's Guerrero-Saade argues that it also raises questions about the validity of any evidence pulled from a computer that's been hacked by a law enforcement surveillance operation. "This should invite a conversation about whether we can trust law enforcement with these sorts of malware operations at all," says Guerrero-Saade. "What does it mean to have evidentiary integrity when you have a compromised device? What does it mean for somebody to hack a device for fact-finding in a law enforcement operation when they can also alter the contents of the device in question?"

Beyond any larger questions, Guerrero-Saade and his fellow SentinelOne researcher Tom Hegel say they're focused on the fate of the victims in the Bhima Koregaon case, almost all of whom have remained in jail even as the evidence against them proves to be more corrupt with every year. Ultimately, the researchers hope their findings can not only demonstrate police wrongdoing in the case, but win those activists and human rights defenders their freedom. "The real concern here is the folks languishing in prison," says Guerrero-Saade. "We're hoping this leads to some form of justice."

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HEADLINE	06/16 Task force to fight online harassment
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Business/wireStory/vp-harris-launches-task-force-online-harassment-abuse-85443145
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON -- Vice President Kamala Harris and administration officials on Thursday launched a task force dedicated to fighting online harassment and abuse, which they warned can be a precursor to real-life violence.</p> <p>"The internet is an essential part of life in the 21st century," Harris said, but for many — particularly women, people of color, and people who are not heterosexual — "the internet is a place of fear."</p>

The task force will address several issues, including prevention of online abuse and services for people who are targeted. It is scheduled to issue recommendations for the federal government and private companies in 180 days.

"All of us have a responsibility to stand together to support those who have gone through this, and also recognize they shouldn't have to be alone fighting on this issue," Harris said.

Although the problem is not new, it has taken on new urgency following mass shootings in Texas and New York that were predated by misogynist and racist commentary on social media and message boards.

Harris was introduced by Sloane Stephens, a Black professional tennis player who has faced a torrent of racist abuse.

"I'm a daughter, a sister, a wife. And I am more than an athlete, more than a label," Stephens said. "Yet all of that is disregarded when people online seek to harass me and harm me. No matter whether I win or lose, someone online is mad, and they will make it known."

After matches, Stephens said, she is worried to pick up her phone because "I know what will be waiting for me when I unlock it."

The National Security Council is working with the White House Gender Policy Council on the initiative, and Attorney General Merrick Garland and Surgeon General Vivek Murthy participated in Thursday's announcement.

Garland said the Justice Department had dedicated additional resources to issues like online stalking.

"We are committed to relentlessly investigating these crimes, bringing to justice those who perpetrate them, and providing support for the survivors," he said.

Murthy said people often turn to the internet when they are lonely or looking to make connections, "yet all too often what they find instead is harassment and abuse."

"It can no longer be acceptable for a technology company to put out a product and walk away from the responsibility for how it impacts users and communities," he said. "It can no longer be OK for social media platforms to be fertile grounds for hatred."

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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	06/17 Philippine militants in beheading surrender
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/abu-sayyaf-canada-philippines-manila-terrorism-5e13ebdd82f73ed0f9294fce60ecae68
GIST	<p>MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Two long-wanted Abu Sayyaf militant commanders accused of beheading two kidnapped Canadian tourists and a German in the southern Philippines have surrendered to authorities, officials said Friday.</p> <p>Almujer Yadah and Bensito Quitino gave themselves up to military officials in Jolo town in southern Sulu province and surrendered their assault rifles, Sulu military commander Maj. Gen. Ignatius Patrimonio and other security officials said. The officials did not provide details of how and when the surrenders were arranged.</p> <p>The two were briefly presented in a news conference in an army camp in Jolo and later turned over to police.</p>

Sulu provincial police chief Col. Jaime Mojica said they will face multiple murder and other criminal charges, including violation of the country's anti-terrorism law. The militants are accused of beheading the hostages after failing to obtain large ransoms they had demanded.

They also were involved in other ransom kidnappings and bomb attacks, Mojica said.

Canadian tourists Robert Hall and John Ridsdel were abducted by Abu Sayyaf gunmen from a marina on southern Samal island along with a Norwegian and a Filipino in September 2015 and taken to jungle camps in Sulu.

Hall and Ridsdel were beheaded by the militants months later after the deadline for payment of the ransoms passed. Videos released by the militants showed the victims being brutally killed in front of an Islamic State group-style black flag. The Norwegian and Filipino hostages were eventually freed.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said at the time that he was horrified by the killings and affirmed Canada's refusal to "pay ransoms for hostages to terrorist groups, as doing so would endanger the lives of more Canadians." He said Canada was working with the Philippine government "to pursue those responsible for these heinous acts and bring them to justice, however long it takes."

Other key suspects in the kidnappings and killings of Hall and Ridsdel were killed earlier in clashes with Philippine forces.

Mojica said the two militants were also involved in the 2017 beheading in Sulu of German hostage Jurgen Gustav Kantner. Abu Sayyaf gunmen seized Kantner at gunpoint and killed a woman sailing with him off neighboring Malaysia's Sabah state. Villagers later found a dead woman on a yacht with a German flag off Sulu's Laparan Island.

The United States and the Philippines have labeled the Abu Sayyaf a terrorist organization for kidnappings, beheadings and bombings. The small but brutal group emerged in the early 1990s as an extremist offshoot of a decades-long Muslim separatist rebellion in the southern Philippines, the homeland of minority Muslims in the largely Roman Catholic nation.

The Abu Sayyaf has been weakened considerably by decades of military offensives, surrenders and infighting, and is currently estimated by the military to have less than 200 armed fighters, but remains a national security threat.

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HEADLINE	06/16 Officials identify captured ISIS leader
SOURCE	https://www.centcom.mil/MEDIA/NEWS-ARTICLES/News-Article-View/Article/3065554/officials-identify-detained-senior-isis-leader/
GIST	<p>BAGHDAD – Coalition forces identified the senior ISIS leader detained during a June 16 counterterrorism operation in Aleppo, Syria, as Hani Ahmed al-Kurdi.</p> <p>Al-Kurdi was an experienced bomb maker and operational facilitator who became one of the top leaders in the Syrian branch of ISIS.</p> <p>Hani Ahmed al-Kurdi, known as Salim, was responsible for coordinating terrorist activities across the region. He was instructing others on making explosive devices, supporting the construction of improvised explosive device facilities, and facilitating attacks on U.S. and partner forces.</p> <p>The mission to capture al-Kurdi was meticulously planned to minimize the risk of civilian harm or collateral damage. The successful mission avoided any harm to civilians or civilian infrastructure and resulted in no damage to Coalition aircraft or assets.</p>

	Coalition forces will continue to work with our partners, the Syrian Democratic Forces and the Iraqi Security Forces, including the Peshmerga, to hunt the remnants of ISIS wherever they hide to ensure their enduring defeat.
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HEADLINE	06/16 Burkina Faso violence intensifies
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/06/16/burkina-faso-massacre-extremists-coup/
GIST	<p>When Amadou Dicko heard the first shots, he knew he had to flee.</p> <p>The 30-year-old told his family to leave their belongings and run as insurgents descended Saturday on Seytenga, a village in northern Burkina Faso. Gunmen killed at least 79 people in the attack that followed, government officials said, making it one of the deadliest since Islamist extremists gained a foothold in the West African nation seven years ago.</p> <p>Dicko, whose best friend was fatally shot, described it as “total carnage.”</p> <p>The massacre in Seytenga underscored the increasingly perilous security situation in Burkina Faso, where military leaders ousted the president in a coup in January. At the time, officers promised to restore peace to the country, where militants linked to the Islamic State and al-Qaeda have killed thousands and displaced more than 1.5 million.</p> <p>But violence has only intensified under military rule. Attacks by insurgents have increased by 23 percent in the five months since Lt. Col. Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba took power, compared with the five months before the coup, said Hédi Nsaibia, a senior researcher at the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED). Fatalities — including civilians, militants and security forces — increased by 15 percent during the same time period, according to Nsaibia’s data.</p> <p>“The militants have an interest in showing that it doesn’t matter if there is a new regime in place,” Nsaibia said. “They want to demonstrate that the previous president failed, but things aren’t going to change just because you have a military junta.”</p> <p>Extremist violence was already on the rise under President Roch Marc Kaboré, rendering much of the countryside ungovernable. The death toll from insurgent attacks in Burkina Faso last year was higher than in Mali, making this landlocked nation of 21 million people the epicenter of the growing security crisis in the Sahel. Last summer, at least 138 people were killed in the northeastern village of Solhan in a massacre that was carried out mostly by child soldiers.</p> <p>Although no group has claimed the attack in Seytenga, Nsaibia said a branch of the Islamic State, which is most active in that part of northern Burkina Faso, is probably responsible. In a sign of the government’s weakness, Nsaibia said, military police had withdrawn from the area last week after insurgents killed 11 officers.</p> <p>Soon afterward, gunmen arrived in the village.</p> <p>Many in the region were hoping the coup would bring improvements, said Alioune Tine, founder of the AfrikaJom Center, a human rights think tank based in Senegal.</p> <p>“In fact,” he said, “the situation is deteriorating. We’re really worried.”</p> <p>Lionel Bilgo, a spokesman for the government, said the increase in terrorist violence “is in reality acts of reprisal due to the recent rise in power of the army.”</p> <p>“The terrorists have suffered several offensives from our armed forces causing the loss of several of their fighters,” he said, adding that the country must come together to defeat extremism.</p>

	<p>A security analyst based in the capital, Ouagadougou, said the new government should be supporting social and economic development in the country.</p> <p>“We don’t have a clear strategy,” said the analyst, who was not authorized by his employer to speak to the media. “The strategy we do have is focused on using the military to fight terrorism. And every day we are losing.”</p> <p>Eric Kinda, a spokesman for Le Balai Citoyen, a political grass-roots movement in Burkina Faso, said that many people are angry and that communication from the government is “totally out of step from reality.” Attacks like those on Seytenga, he said, undermine the official narrative that the army is in control.</p> <p>“We wonder whether the state is capable of getting the country out of this situation of general chaos,” Kinda said.</p> <p>The escalating violence has led to mass job losses, at a time when the region is already grappling with historic inflation. Mines have been shut down because of security concerns and farmers are unable to work their land.</p> <p>After the attack on Seytenga, thousands of people fled to Dori, a small city that’s the capital of Burkina Faso’s Sahel administrative region. Among them was Dicko, who said that people in Dori had welcomed them but that there were not enough resources for the displaced.</p> <p>He said Tuesday that he was not sure where he would sleep that night, and hoped to return to Seytenga. Above all, he said, he and his family just wanted to feel secure in their home.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Buffalo shooting act of ‘domestic terrorism’
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/charges-against-accused-buffalo-shooter-point-to-alleged-act-of-domestic-terrorism-government-says-11655405466?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON—Senior Justice Department officials said they viewed the killing of 10 people in a racist massacre at a Buffalo supermarket as an act of domestic terrorism after federal hate-crimes charges were brought against the suspect, saying they were relying on existing statutes amid a broader debate about whether new tools are needed to combat violent extremism.</p> <p>Payton Gendron, 18 years old, made his first appearance in federal court Thursday to face 26 counts of hate crimes and firearms offenses, including one that carries the potential penalty of death.</p> <p>The federal judge in the case urged prosecutors to decide promptly whether they intend to pursue a capital sentence.</p> <p>Mr. Gendron, who is white, posted a 180-page document online filled with racist rants and details of his plans to target Black people in Buffalo before live-streaming himself opening fire. The attack left 10 people dead and three wounded. All but two of his 13 victims were Black.</p> <p>Law enforcement “immediately identified this attack as a hate crime and an act of racially motivated violent extremism directed at the very heart of this community,” Deputy FBI Director Paul Abbate said.</p> <p>Prosecutors can file hate-crime charges when they believe that a suspect has been motivated by hatred toward a specific group, in this case Black people. But Justice Department officials say the reach of hate-crime statutes can also help them combat what they see as a rise in violent attacks that they view as domestic terrorism and which may target a random group of victims.</p> <p>“In many cases...a hate crime, which is violence motivated by things like religion, race, gender or sexual orientation, might also be designed to coerce a civilian population or influence government policy, which implicates the definition of domestic terrorism,” said Matt Olsen, who runs the Justice Department’s</p>

national-security division, in a speech Wednesday at George Washington University's Program on Extremism.

The issue of whether to introduce a more sweeping federal statute specifically for domestic terrorism has long simmered in Congress and in Washington national-security circles, including at the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Justice Department.

Proponents argue that U.S. officials have limited ability to monitor communications between people on American soil who may be intent on violence, unlike the surveillance authority they have for monitoring overseas. Some current and former officials say they need an additional statute to empower that equivalent level of authority.

Those against say prosecutors can use existing laws, and they cite civil liberties concerns about government monitoring of U.S. citizens inside America. Senate Republicans last month [blocked debate on a bill](#) that would establish new federal-government domestic terrorism offices, saying the proposed legislation could open the way for the government to target conservatives for their political views.

In his remarks, Mr. Olsen described the Buffalo case as an example of officials determining that the hate-crimes statute was the best tool for prosecutors to use to go after conduct they viewed as domestic terrorism. "We asked, 'what is the best and strongest tool in our arsenal at the department that we can use to respond?'," Mr. Olsen said. But he noted that such charges wouldn't apply in other cases the Justice Department views as acts of domestic terrorism, including those that didn't target specific racial or religious groups.

In addition to the federal case brought Wednesday, Mr. Gendron also [faces a number of state-level charges](#), including first-degree murder, in the May 14 attack at the Tops Friendly Markets. He pleaded not guilty to those charges.

Mr. Gendron hasn't entered a plea in the federal case, as a grand jury hasn't yet returned an indictment. On Thursday, he told U.S. Magistrate Judge H. Kenneth Schroeder Jr. he has just \$16 in his bank account, prompting the judge to assign him a federal public defender with experience in death-penalty cases.

Judge Schroeder urged the Justice Department to decide quickly whether it intends to seek death for Mr. Gendron. Attorney General Merrick Garland on Wednesday left that possibility open despite having put a [moratorium on federal executions](#), citing his own concerns about capital punishment. He hasn't authorized any U.S. attorney to pursue the death penalty since taking office 15 months ago.

The Justice Department has a lengthy decision-making process for seeking death, with the attorney general making the final call on whether to approve it.

Judge Schroeder said Mr. Gendron's case would cost more for taxpayers because it is death-penalty-eligible, noting he had observed cases in which the government expended "huge sums" only for the Justice Department to decide not to pursue death after all.

"I would hope the Department of Justice would undertake steps that would reasonably bring about a quick decision," he said.

Joseph Tripi, a federal prosecutor assigned to the Buffalo supermarket shooting, told the judge Thursday, "The process will be serious. It will be thorough. It will be fair." He added that a decision on whether to seek the death penalty for Mr. Gendron would be coming "as expeditiously as possible."

Mr. Abbate, meanwhile, said the FBI was continuing to investigate whether Mr. Gendron was in communication with other people who might have helped or inspired him.

"We're leaving no stone unturned," he said. "We're continuing to pursue that and we'll see where it leads."

	<p>The Buffalo shooting represents what the FBI has warned is a growing threat posed by extremists advocating for the superiority of the white race, a category whose members it considers most likely to conduct mass-casualty attacks against civilians.</p> <p>In his Wednesday speech, Mr. Olsen said the Justice Department was drawing from lessons it had learned over 20 years of fighting international terrorism in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks to tackle domestic terrorism. Among the most concerning and difficult attacks to thwart, he said, were those committed by people, like Mr. Gendron, who aren't connected to broader groups but are motivated by apparent racial animus or antigovernment stances.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 France: drone strikes 'new tactical success'
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/politics-africa-burkina-faso-niger-counterterrorism-4f7a6e16632d96674f20e9d50860de2c
GIST	<p>NIAMEY, Niger (AP) — French drone strikes killed nearly 40 Islamic extremists earlier this week who were traveling on motorcycles near Niger's border with Burkina Faso, France's military announced Thursday.</p> <p>In a statement, the French military called the strikes a "new tactical success" for France's counterterrorism efforts in Africa's Sahel region, named Operation Barkhane.</p> <p>"Intelligence obtained from Nigerien units in contact with the column confirmed that the motorcycles belonged to an armed terrorist group moving between Burkina Faso and Niger," Barkhane said in the statement.</p> <p>"In close coordination with Niger's Armed Forces, the Barkhane force conducted several strikes against the column. Nearly 40 terrorists were neutralized."</p> <p>Niger's government also issued a statement, saying the jihadis were killed after an attack earlier this week killed eight security forces in southwestern Niger.</p> <p>The drone strikes in Niger come as France reorganizes its military efforts in the broader Sahel region, the vast area south of the Sahara Desert where it was once a colonial power and still maintains strong economic ties. Niger has become a more reliable ally after military coups overthrew the democratically elected presidents of neighboring Mali and Burkina Faso over the last two years.</p> <p>Earlier this year, France announced it was withdrawing all its forces from Mali nine years after the French military led an effort that ousted Islamic extremists from Timbuktu and other centers in northern Mali. The decision to withdraw from Mali came amid increasing hostility toward the French armed presence and tensions with the country's leader, who led two coups nine months apart to consolidate his power.</p> <p>France has said that it planned to reposition its forces from Mali to other countries in the Sahel region including Niger. Extremist violence is growing in the Sahel, including in Niger's southwest neighbor, Burkina Faso, which is battling growing jihadi attacks.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 BP nabs 50 migrants on terror watchlist
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jun/16/15-people-terror-watch-list-were-captured-sneaking/
GIST	<p>Border Patrol agents recorded nabbing 15 illegal immigrants in May whose names popped a flag in Homeland Security's terrorism screening database, according to data released by Homeland Security this week that showed the free-for-all at the southern border continues unabated.</p> <p>All told, 50 people on the terrorism watchlist have been apprehended by agents as they sneaked in through the southern border this fiscal year. As of April, it was just 35.</p>

The numbers were part of a late-night press release Wednesday, which showed overall encounters with illegal immigrants hitting new records in the Biden administration, with 239,416 people nabbed — 222,646 of them caught by Border Patrol agents as they sneaked across, and the rest by officers at ports of entry.

All of the key categories showed increases, from unaccompanied juveniles, which surged 21% in May, to migrants traveling as families, which rose 8%.

Customs and Border Protection tallied nearly 12,000 people detained in its facilities on any given day in May, topping March's previous high.

And the number of unique encounters — migrants who haven't tried to cross in the last 12 months — also surged 15% in May, to 177,793. That is particularly worrying for border authorities who had insisted the bad numbers under Mr. Biden were artificially inflated by recidivists.

The one bright spot was drug seizures, where all four major categories — cocaine, fentanyl, heroin and methamphetamine — were down. Seizures, like arrests of migrants, are considered a rough yardstick of the overall flow. So the drop in drug seizures likely means fewer drugs are getting through undetected.

CBP doesn't report its estimate for how many migrants are evading capture, but agents say it's more than 1,000 a day.

Of the nearly 240,000 migrants who were encountered, just 42% of those were expelled under the Title 42 pandemic emergency policy, while the rest were processed under normal immigration rules — which under the Biden administration usually means being released into communities to await eventual court proceedings.

"Joe Biden's border crisis is inhumane and is destroying communities — his open border empowers drug traffickers and criminals," said Ronna McDaniel, chair of the Republican National Committee, who called on President Biden. to make his first trip to the border to see first-hand "the harm and devastation he created."

For his part, CBP Commissioner Chris Magnus pleaded with migrants to think twice before trying the journey.

"The terrain along the Southwest Border is extreme, the summer heat is severe, and the miles of desert that migrants must hike after crossing the border are unforgiving," he said. "Our message to those who would try and gain illegal entry to the United States remains the same — don't make the dangerous journey only to be sent back."

The Washington Times has reached out to CBP for comment on the number of terrorism suspects.

The 15 caught in May is equal to the entire total of 2021, and more than any previous year in CBP's published records dating back to 2017.

CBP as a whole reports encountering 242 people on the terrorism screening database (TSDB) in fiscal year 2022, which began Oct. 1.

The vast majority of those are coming through ports of entry, particularly on the northern boundary with Canada, where they pop when they present their identification and their names are run through the system.

Todd Bensman, author of "America's Covert Border War," an analysis of immigration and terrorism, says many of those are attributed to the same few people — perhaps a truck driver who goes back and forth regularly, and who may not even be aware authorities have him flagged in the system.

Those caught by the Border Patrol, however, present a different situation. They were sneaking across, and were only nabbed because agents were able to be there.

That raises the worrying question of how many more made it through undetected.

In late May, federal prosecutors revealed they had busted an assassination plot against former President George W. Bush and arrested an Iraqi man who they said was planning to sneak an ISIS hit squad across the southern border to carry out the killing.

The man bragged in conversations recorded by investigators that he had already helped smuggle two Hezbollah agents into the U.S., at \$50,000 per person, according to court documents filed in the case.

CBP rarely releases information about specific people on terrorism watch lists who are nabbed at the borders.

Last spring, one Border Patrol sector did issue a press release on two men from Yemen captured in southeastern California, but that release was scrubbed from the web.

An agency spokesperson at the time said the release “was not properly reviewed” before posting.

The presence of terrorism suspects in the flow of illegal immigrants has long been heatedly debated.

When congressional Republican leaders last year suggested some were coming across, they were pummeled by critics and media fact-checkers who said the GOP lawmakers were blowing things out of proportion.

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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	06/16 Historic heat wave underway in Europe
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/06/16/europe-heatwave-spain-france-germany/
GIST	<p>A punishing heat wave is underway in parts of Western Europe, with widespread temperatures near or above 104 degrees Fahrenheit (40 Celsius) expected through the weekend. Heat is expected to peak in France on Saturday and center over Germany by Sunday, but Spain, Poland and Austria will all feel abnormally high temperatures for the next few days.</p> <p>Heat has already been building. On Wednesday, Madrid rose to around 105 (40.5 Celsius). The State Meteorological Agency called it the earliest major heat wave in more than 40 years. Similar temperatures were seen across the area Thursday, with official numbers still being tabulated.</p> <p>Catalonia, a region in northeastern Spain, had one of its hottest days on record Thursday, with a scorching 109 degrees (43.1 Celsius). Saint-Jean-de-Minervois, France, hit 104 degrees (40 Celsius) on Thursday — the earliest the country has hit that high temperature in recorded history.</p> <p>The heat comes after other major preseason heat events in Europe during May. Spain and France both recorded their hottest May on record.</p> <p>Locations in Poland, Austria and perhaps even Russia or Ukraine may experience abnormally high temperatures by early next week.</p> <p>Weekend forecast Temperatures are expected to be as much as 15 to 20C above normal this weekend. (weatherbell.com)</p>

Daytime readings are likely to soar as high as 25 to 35 degrees (15 to 20 Celsius) above normal the next several days across a large chunk of the continent. The most expansive day of debilitating heat may be Saturday, with absurdly high readings stretching from Spain to Poland.

Forecast readings a few thousand feet off the ground are predicted to be in the 99th percentile or greater for much of Western Europe. A snapshot for Saturday, below, focuses on France.

Scott Duncan, a meteorologist based in Scotland, [tweeted](#) that the event could be “one of the most profound heat waves in French history. An immense number of records are about to fall.”

Temperatures in Madrid, where the heat wave has been underway since Monday, may have peaked or are now near peak. Any cooling is relative, as highs flirt with 100 degrees (38 Celsius) through Saturday.

In Paris, temperatures are forecast to be near 90 degrees (32 Celsius) on Friday, close to 100 (38 Celsius) Saturday, and still near 95 (35 Celsius) on Sunday. Berlin is also slated to see temperatures at least as hot as 95 degrees (35 Celsius) both days this weekend.

London will probably escape the worst of this heat wave, but even there, toasty temperatures will run between 80 and 85 degrees (27 to 30 Celsius) over the next few days.

There will be little relief when the sun goes down. Temperatures at night are forecast to run as much as 25 degrees (15 Celsius) above normal.

While daytime heat often grabs the headlines, the lack of relief at night tends to be as bad or worse for a population largely without air conditioning. This is particularly true of those already at risk, such as the elderly, the very young or the infirm, as well as homeless individuals.

Coping with the heat

In Spain, where significant heat is more common than in other parts of the continent, air-conditioning usage is as high as [1 in 3](#) for residential homes across the country, and up to 70 percent in a city like Seville. Estimates of access to air conditioning are much lower to the northeast.

Both [France and Germany](#) are reported to have roughly 5 percent or fewer residential homes with air conditioning, although percentages are probably growing given notable heat spells in recent years. In contrast, more than [90 percent](#) of people in the United States have access to air conditioning at home.

This early-season spell of intense heat comes at the same time that parts of the United States have been [dealing with a major heat wave](#). Record-high and record-warm low temperatures have covered much of the central and southeast United States in recent days, and another heat pulse is likely to build in the Midwest and push east early next week.

These heat waves over the past month are only a few of a slew affecting the world in the past several years. This spring, India and Pakistan registered their hottest March and April on record amid a series of heat waves, which were [30 times as likely](#) to have occurred because of climate change. In 2021, the Pacific Northwest hit record temperatures in a heat wave deemed [“virtually impossible”](#) without global warming.

“Climate change is bringing more frequent extreme weather events. Drought and water shortage are expected in France this summer, with direct damage to agriculture,” Marc Poumadere, a risk scientist in Paris at the Symlog Institute of France, wrote in an email.

Heat wave days could double by 2050 in the Iberian Peninsula, [according to one study](#). It [finds that](#) as heat waves grow longer and more intense, so will dangers to human health, fire threat and energy demand.

Despite the challenges, there are signs that Europe continues to adapt to the increased frequency of intense heat.

	“In 2003, the risks of heat waves were largely underestimated, causing that year in France some 20,000 excess deaths,” wrote Poumadere. “France now applies a heat wave plan to limit fatalities.”
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HEADLINE	06/16 Arctic Circle town warmer day than Seattle
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/weather/just-chillin-towns-in-arctic-circle-have-had-warmer-days-than-seattles-73
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - We all know this winter and spring ...and early summer have been a bit on the cool side this year around Seattle.</p> <p>(Maybe the term for some is "painfully aware" ...)</p> <p>But it may or may not surprise you to find out it's never been quite this cool for nearly the first half of the year.</p> <p>So far in 2022, Seattle's warmest day has been 73 degrees, reached first on April 7 and again on June 2.</p> <p>That's it.</p> <p>That is the coldest maximum temperature from Jan. 1 to June 15 since records have been kept at Sea-Tac Airport in 1945. The previous record was 74 degrees set in 2010. This is only the 11th year we have failed to reach the 80-degree mark by now.</p> <p>Looking for warmth? Head east... or even, north?</p> <p>And Seattle is nearly alone with its 2022 chill -- or at least is in sparse company.</p> <p>Alaska Climatologist Brian Brettschneider went through all the observations across the U.S. and Canada to see who else has been at 73 degrees or below for the year.</p> <p>For starters, don't bother looking east of the Rockies in the U.S., they've all been warmer. Some places along the ocean, especially in the Pacific Northwest and Canadian Maritimes haven't hit 73 either, as is true for several stations in mountainous elevations.</p> <p>But several sites in northern Canada have warmed above 73... as have some towns in southern and western Alaska. Those two red dots in northern Alaska are above the Arctic Circle including the town of Wiseman, which has managed to have a warmer day than Seattle, according to Brettschneider.</p> <p>The weather has been particularly chilly -- or at least noticeably below average -- since the start of April. A whopping 63 out of 76 days (83%!) have been considered below average, compared to just nine above average and four days on the money, according to the National Weather Service in Seattle.</p> <p>Of those 63 days, 44 had a high temperature of 5 degrees or more below average, while 17 (about 1 in 5) had a temperature 10 degrees or more below average.</p> <p>And there is little change in the forecast for the next several days, with high temperatures expected to remain in the 60s into next week - though Seattle could nudge 70 next Tuesday.</p> <p>The long range forecast for the next two weeks still maintains high confidence of below average temperatures.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 SPU: scammers impersonating utilities
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/seattle-public-utilities-warns-scammers-are-impersonating-employees-heres-how-to-know-if-call-is-a-scam/

GIST	<p>Seattle Public Utilities is warning of a scam where a caller, pretending to be a bill collector from SPU or City Light, threatens to shut off waste collection, water or power if a payment is not made over the phone.</p> <p>Seattle City Light warned of a similar scam last summer and said this week callers are using the same tactics but their methods “continue to advance and target seemingly everyone.”</p> <p>The public utility is reminding customers that employees will never shut off service without advance written warning and won’t call to ask for immediate payment through a prepaid credit card or third-party digital app. SPU and City Light will never threaten customers or use aggressive language, the utility said.</p> <p>If you believe you are speaking to a scammer, hang up and contact the utility at 206-684-3000 to verify your account status and report the scam.</p> <p>According to SPU, scammers may target businesses, people with limited English proficiency and elderly customers. Scammers may also use phone numbers that resemble an official city of Seattle number.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Probe: anti-migrant Border Patrol coins
SOURCE	https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2022-06-16/coins-border-patrol-haitian-immigrants
GIST	<p>The photograph encapsulates the intensity of the clashes between Border Patrol agents and Haitian immigrants desperate to get into the United States.</p> <p>An agent on horseback leans over, grabbing a man by the shirt as a rein dangles.</p> <p>Now an image mirroring the Sept. 19 photo by Paul Ratje of Agence France-Presse has appeared on a “challenge coin” typically collected by agents, law enforcement officials and aficionados.</p> <p>“Whipping ass since 1924” is written along the coin’s border.</p> <p>The Times obtained photos of the coin. Its other side says “Haitian Invasion” with crossed swords and the words “U.S. Border Patrol,” “Horse Patrol Unit” and “deflecting allegations for years.”</p> <p>U.S. Customs and Border Protection, which includes the Border Patrol, is investigating whether the coin and a similar one, which have been advertised online, were sold by anyone from the agency. It is unclear who produced the coins or how widely they have been distributed.</p> <p>If the coins are connected to Border Patrol agents, they could become the latest example of what immigrant advocates have said is a prevalence of offensive humor within the ranks, after Facebook posts making fun of dead migrants and lawmakers surfaced in 2019.</p> <p>Some critics have raised the question of racism against Black immigrants. And the head of Customs and Border Protection has denounced the coins.</p> <p>“These coins anger me because the hateful images on them have no place in a professional law enforcement agency,” CBP Commissioner Chris Magnus said in a statement. “Those who make or share these deeply offensive coins detract and distract from the extraordinarily difficult and often life-saving work Border Patrol agents do every day across the country.”</p> <p>Immigrant advocates were similarly outraged at the coin and the seeming lack of empathy for Haitian migrants it indicates.</p> <p>“I think this is a testament of how embedded anti-Black racism is in the very fabric of the system of our country,” said Guerline Jozef, head of the Haitian Bridge Alliance in San Diego. “For people who might be associated with CBP to feel emboldened enough to engrave the likeness of a human being abused or</p>

mistreated as a symbol of what the department stands for.... We see these coins as an endorsement of what happened, and those responsible must be held accountable.”

“Challenge coins” have long been a part of law enforcement culture, including at the Department of Homeland Security, which includes CBP. They are generally innocuous, honoring employees or special events, former officials said, and are sometimes exchanged with members of other agencies.

One former senior Homeland Security official, John Sandweg, said he got a coin with a buffalo on it after visiting an agency office in upstate New York and another with a picture of a border tunnel commemorating a drug task force.

But the coins depicting the Haitian immigrants crossed a line, he and another former lead Homeland Security official said.

The other coin under investigation contained the same image of the migrant and the agent on horseback, with the words “honor will always be first.”

“It’s just outrageously inappropriate,” said Sandweg, a former lead Homeland Security attorney and acting head of Immigration and Customs Enforcement under President Obama. “This kind of thing sullies the reputation of the department where a few bad apples are doing stuff that really shocks the conscience and is so far beyond what is appropriate and acceptable. It hurts the entire department’s reputation.”

“This is a shame that this was done,” said Gil Kerlikowske, who was head of U.S. Customs and Border Protection under Obama. “This kind of grotesque humor permeates ... a lot of professions, including in law enforcement groups.”

Kerlikowske and Sandweg said that “challenge coins” are a big part of Homeland Security culture and are generally meant for camaraderie and celebration. Sandweg said that when he visited local agency offices, he was sometimes gifted a coin celebrating that location, including the one from Buffalo. Other coins were handed out to remember special occasions or to honor staffers.

Head offices, like those of the Homeland Security secretary or ICE director, also made their own coins to hand out to employees.

Sandweg said that the design of coins is often decided upon at a local office, then sent to coin makers. Government funds can be used if the coin is for an honorary award, he said.

“Almost no oversight is exercised on the design of the coins,” he added. “No doubt the use of any official seal in conjunction with this message violated DHS policy, but there was never much guidance or oversight out there on what the coins can say. Of course, nobody was ever so dumb and misguided as to create a coin like this.”

The “Haitian Invasion” coin was brought to CBP officials’ attention in recent weeks, said a source with knowledge of the situation.

In addition to the internal investigation, cease-and-desist letters will be sent to vendors who produce unauthorized challenge coins using a CBP trademarked brand.

CBP is also investigating the actions of the Border Patrol agents who targeted Haitian migrants, as in the incident depicted on the coins. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro N. Mayorkas has promised to release the results of that investigation.

The Biden administration’s decision to begin the mass deportation of Haitians in September caused alarm among immigrant advocates and prominent Democratic politicians. Thousands of Haitians were expelled and continue to be removed from the country.

	<p>It typified, to many, the White House's turn toward restrictive policies in a political crisis, this time prompted by media coverage of Haitians camping beneath a bridge in Texas.</p> <p>Since September, the administration has relied on the Title 42 policy, which cites the pandemic, as a justification to remove Haitians and other asylum seekers arriving at the border.</p> <p>Border Patrol agents have long faced allegations of excessive force. The Supreme Court issued a ruling this week that will shield agents from being sued over such allegations.</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	06/17 UK approves Assange extradition to US
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/world/julian-assange-extradition-approved-british-government
GIST	<p>Julian Assange's extradition to the United States on spying charges was approved by British Home Secretary Priti Patel on Friday.</p> <p>The WikiLeaks co-founder's legal team is expected to file an appeal in the required 14 days. The development follows a British court ruling in April that Assange could be sent to the U.S.</p> <p>The Home Office said in a statement that "the U.K courts have not found that it would be oppressive, unjust or an abuse of process to extradite Mr. Assange."</p> <p>The decision is a big moment in Assange's years-long battle to avoid being sent to the U.S.</p> <p>The U.S. requested the extradition so that Assange can stand trial on 17 charges of espionage and one charge of computer misuse over WikiLeaks' publication of a huge trove of classified documents years ago.</p> <p>American prosecutors allege Assange helped U.S. Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning steal classified military files that WikiLeaks later published, putting lives at risk.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/17 Louisiana juvenile detention: 20 in uprising
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/us/juvenile-inmates-break-loose-louisiana-detention-center
GIST	<p>Around 20 inmates at a Louisiana juvenile detention center broke loose in an "uprising" inside the perimeter of the facility Thursday night, prompting a SWAT response, the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office told Fox News Digital.</p> <p>One Office of Juvenile Justice employee and two juveniles were injured in the incident in which the inmates were able to take "control of areas inside the facility."</p> <p>"Around 9:48 pm, we received word that there was a disturbance inside the facility," the sheriff's department said. "Around 20 youths escaped their housing areas and took control of areas inside the facility. None were able to escape the grounds. Around 40-50 deputies from our Patrol Division and Crisis Management Unit (SWAT) responded and were able to secure the facility by about midnight. The youths were returned to the custody of the Office of Juvenile Justice (OJJ), the state agency that operates the facility."</p> <p>The three injured people were taken to the hospital in unknown condition.</p> <p>The incident is only the latest breach at the troubled facility and comes just hours after five inmates escaped early Thursday morning through a hole in a bathroom ceiling – one of whom was still at large as of early Friday.</p>

	<p>Bridge City is in the New Orleans metropolitan area.</p> <p>"There was a staffing issue," State Senator Pat Connick, R-Marrero, told WWL-TV. "Someone was not paying attention. They got out of the gate, got out of the facility."</p> <p>He said the facility should be shut down.</p> <p>"The facility is not designed to house inmates like these kids," he said.</p> <p>Before that breakout more than a dozen inmates had temporarily escaped from the facility since April 2021, including a 19-year-old who beat a female guard and locked her in a bathroom according to WWL.</p> <p>"Keep in mind these aren't just juvenile offenders, these are violent juvenile offenders: armed robbers, murderers, rapists and this facility is a minimum-security facility," Jefferson Parish Councilman Deano Bonano said Thursday morning. "It wasn't designed for this."</p> <p>Connick said Gov. John Bel Edwards, a Democrat, "knows that this is a problem. Staffing is a major problem. The parole officers I understand are being brought into the jail to guard the inmates instead of being on the streets doing their work as parole officers."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Guilty plea in threatening election official
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/man-pleads-guilty-to-threatening-election-official/
GIST	<p>A Nebraska man pleaded guilty today to making multiple threatening posts on an Instagram page associated with an election official.</p> <p>According to court documents, Travis Ford, 42, of Lincoln, made multiple threats in August 2021 toward the election official, specifically: "Do you feel safe? You shouldn't. Do you think Soros will/can protect you?" and "Your security detail is far too thin and incompetent to protect you. This world is unpredictable these days....anything can happen to anyone."</p> <p>"The Justice Department will not tolerate illegal threats of violence against public officials," said Attorney General Merrick B. Garland. "Threats of violence against election officials are dangerous for people's safety and dangerous for our democracy, and we will use every resource at our disposal to disrupt and investigate those threats and hold perpetrators accountable."</p> <p>"Threatening violence against election workers in an attempt to intimidate them while in performance of their duties will not be tolerated," said FBI Director Christopher Wray. "Threats to election workers have no place in our society, and today's plea demonstrates the success of our collaborative efforts to ensure the safety of the workers we entrust to effectuate the democratic process."</p> <p>"We are proud to work with our partners at FBI Denver, the U.S. Attorney's Office in Nebraska, and the Justice Department's Criminal Division to hold this defendant accountable for threatening an election official in Colorado," said U.S. Attorney Cole Finegan for the District of Colorado. "If you make online threats of violence, do not count on remaining anonymous."</p> <p>Ford also posted similar messages on Instagram pages associated with the President of the United States and with another public figure.</p> <p>Ford is scheduled to be sentenced on Oct. 6 and faces up to two years in prison. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.</p>

Assistant Attorney General Kenneth A. Polite, Jr. of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, U.S. Attorney Steven A. Russell for the District of Nebraska, and Assistant Director Luis Quesada of the FBI's Criminal Investigative Division made the announcement.

FBI Denver is investigating the case, with the assistance of FBI Omaha.

Trial Attorney Jonathan E. Jacobson of the Criminal Division's Public Integrity Section and Assistant U.S. Attorney Tessie L. Smith for the District of Nebraska are prosecuting the case. Substantial assistance was provided by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Aaron M. Teitelbaum and Cyrus Y. Chung for the District of Colorado.

This case is part of the Justice Department's Election Threats Task Force. Announced by Attorney General Merrick B. Garland and launched by Deputy Attorney General Lisa O. Monaco in June 2021, the task force has led the department's efforts to address threats of violence against election workers, and to ensure that all election workers — whether elected, appointed, or volunteer — are able to do their jobs free from threats and intimidation. The task force engages with the election community and state and local law enforcement to assess allegations and reports of threats against election workers, and has investigated and prosecuted these matters where appropriate, in partnership with FBI field offices and U.S. Attorneys' Offices throughout the country. Nearly a year after its formation, the Task Force is continuing this work and supporting the United States Attorneys' Offices and FBI Field Offices nationwide as they carry on the critical work that the Task Force has begun.

Under the leadership of Deputy Attorney General Monaco, the task force is led by the Criminal Division's Public Integrity Section and includes several other entities within the Department of Justice, including the Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section of the Criminal Division, the Civil Rights Division, the National Security Division, and the FBI, as well as key interagency partners, such as the Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

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For more information regarding the Justice Department's efforts to combat threats against election workers, read the [Deputy Attorney General's memo](#).

HEADLINE	06/16 Police losing narco-war in Amazon region
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/16/amazon-brazil-peru-narcos-drug-cartels-police
GIST	<p>In the crime-infested tri-border region where Dom Phillips and Bruno Pereira disappeared, rumours abound over what happened at Puerto Amelia in January this year.</p> <p>Were Brazilian drug traffickers responsible for burning the Peruvian police outpost on the River Yavarí to the ground? Was it Colombian guerrillas who stormed the camp, shooting at the border guards and making off with their high-powered weapons?</p> <p>Or were the culprits rogue Peruvian police officers, perhaps working for organized crime?</p> <p>The answer depends on who you talk to – but the consequences were the same.</p> <p>Five months after the audacious raid, the camp lies in ruins. Charred logs are the only remnant of a turquoise lodging the Peruvian troops had called home.</p> <p>Filing cabinets and metal bunk beds are scattered in the undergrowth while the ground is littered with empty cans of tuna fish and spam. Tiger orange butterflies dance around an abandoned border marker, bringing colour to an otherwise desolate scene.</p> <p>“They took guns, rifles, bullets, the lot,” said one local, who gave the Guardian a tour of the strategically positioned base, located opposite the entrance to the River Itaquai, where Phillips and Pereira are feared to have been murdered.</p>

The local said the security situation had been deteriorating since 2020 as Latin American drug cartels and factions fought for control of this increasingly lucrative smuggling route.

“This is what the region is like now,” they sighed as they surveyed the deserted police position past which boats packed with drugs can now travel undisturbed. “It didn’t use to be like this.”

But this is not the first such attack on the feeble law enforcement in the Amazon region where Peru meets Colombia and Brazil.

“The narcos are bolder, more aggressive; they have attacked three police posts in the last five years,” a Peruvian anti-narcotics officer said.

“The small [police] bases are too remote, too isolated, too exposed. You need bases with 200 to 300 men, not 10 or 20,” he said. He estimated that 120 tonnes of cocaine base paste were being smuggled across the porous frontier between Peru and Brazil every year.

“This is an area being controlled by organised crime, not by the Peruvian state,” he said. Despite occasional police and military raids, the crime wave has overwhelmed state authorities in all three countries.

“The Amazon is a cancer patient and we’re just giving it a pill for the pain,” he added grimly.

The surge of criminal activity is partly driven by the rapid expansion of plantations of coca – the raw material of cocaine – on the Peruvian side of the triple frontier. Cultivation of the plant in the area known as Bajo Amazonas nearly doubled between 2019 and 2020 from 2,531 to 4,247 hectares, according to the [Peruvian Drugs Observatory](#).

Across Peru, coca cultivation grew by 41% between 2016 and 2020, according to official Peruvian figures – an increase from 439 sq km to 617 sq km. The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) says coca field cultivation is higher, reaching 882 sq km (or [88,200 hectares](#)) in 2020, equivalent to 810 tonnes of potential cocaine.

Peru is the world’s second-biggest producer of cocaine after Colombia, according to the [UN](#), producing around 26% of global cocaine output. The last two years have been bumper harvests.

But the country has also been buffeted by other forces: Peru suffered the [world’s worst recorded per capita death toll](#) in the Covid pandemic and its devastating impact hit law enforcement and drove rocketing unemployment. The result is a bonanza for organised crime in the Amazon region which stretches across more than half the country.

For Indigenous communities, that has led to a rise in [intimidation, violence and murder](#) as drug gangs target their land to plant new coca crops. Covid restrictions made the remote region even more vulnerable by slowing state efforts to protect land and eradicate illegal coca cultivation.

“We are facing a well-structured organisation that protects drug trafficking and other illegal activities in the Amazon,” said Robert Guimaraes, 49, a longtime Indigenous leader in Ucayali, in Peru’s central Amazon.

“Unfortunately, the state does not have the capacity to intervene sufficiently, and above all to support the Indigenous peoples of Ucayali who are on the border [with Brazil],” he said in Flor de Ucayali, the Shipibo-Konibo Indigenous community where he was born.

“There are no police here to give security to the people,” he said, joining a clamour of Indigenous Amazonian leaders who say police and prosecutors are failing to follow up their warnings, and are allowing killers to operate with impunity.

Ricardo Soberón, executive director of Peru's anti-drug agency Devida, told the Guardian that "international drug trafficking has been directed totally towards the Amazon" as a result of the pandemic. It is no coincidence that in 2020, Peru's environment ministry reported record Amazon deforestation. A staggering 2,032 sq km (785 sq miles), a figure almost four times the 548 sq km it lost in 2019.

Across the triple frontier border, Brazil's Amazonas state has become the battleground for a bitter struggle between rival drug militias, the São Paulo-based [First Capital Command](#) and Rio de Janeiro-based [Red Command](#). In the past two years the balance has tipped in favour of the Red Command, according to security experts.

Gen Mauro Esposito, former coordinator of special border operations for Brazil's federal police, said both Brazilian gangs now have cells operating in the cocaine-producing regions of Peru along the length of the two countries' Amazon border, where small planes carrying drugs cargoes make daily flights.

Barbara Arisi, a Brazilian anthropologist of Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam and specialist in the Indigenous peoples of the [Javari Valley](#) (as the Yavarí is known in Brazil), said illegal fishing and hunting were the principal criminal activities in the area where Phillips and Pereira disappeared.

But she worried that drug traffickers using the rivers, or even transporting shipments on foot through the remote region, could put isolated communities at risk, particularly from illnesses to which they have no immunity.

"They could cause whole populations to die and we wouldn't know anything about it," she said. First contact with the Matis people in the 1970s decimated two-thirds of their population, she noted.

"The Indigenous [in the Javari Valley] people have a tragic past," she told the Guardian.

"Now they are fighting because their friends have been killed. They are showing their faces, they are brave enough to protest in the face of organised crime," she added.

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HEADLINE	06/16 Vast money laundering British Columbia
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/16/canada-british-columbia-money-laundering
GIST	<p>British Columbia is a magnet for money laundering, and Canada's lax regulations are allowing billions of dollars to illegally flow into the province, according to the findings of a three-year public inquiry.</p> <p>The inquiry found that such concentration of activity has had an extraordinary impact on the BC economy – but that its influence on the housing market – the original motive for the investigation – has been overstated.</p> <p>In a new report released Wednesday, the public inquiry's lead commissioner, BC supreme court Justice Austin Cullen, said decisively that investors from Asia using the real estate market to launder money is not the cause of a housing crisis that has seen average house prices triple over the past two decades.</p> <p>That finding is in stark opposition to a line that has been touted by politicians for years: that the rising cost of housing in the province is owed almost exclusively to Chinese investors snapping up properties as fronts for money laundering.</p> <p>"Money laundering is not the cause of housing unaffordability," wrote Cullen in his report. "Money laundering should be addressed, to be sure, but steps taken to counteract money laundering should not be viewed as a panacea for housing unaffordability."</p> <p>The Cullen report – which spans more than 1,800 pages and includes 101 recommendations on revamping vast swaths of the BC economy and regulatory environment – is the result of three years of investigation into the relationship between foreign investing and the housing crisis.</p>

Over 2020 and 2021, the public inquiry heard from nearly 200 witnesses, including a notable contingent of experts on global money laundering schemes.

Cullen said failures of law enforcement and government policy have led to the “staggering” proliferation of money laundering in the province. In particular, the “Vancouver model” for laundering was under close examination during the proceedings.

The internationally infamous money laundering framework is used by organized crime groups to deposit their ill-gotten cash through an underground informal value transfer system operating in southern BC’s Lower Mainland region. After depositing the cash, the criminals receive a token of equivalent value – [often casino chips, property or luxury goods](#) – which is run through the global laundering network with the end goal of enabling wealthy Chinese nationals to move their wealth to BC while skirting Chinese currency restrictions.

The Cullen report notes that not all Chinese participants in laundering schemes acquired their wealth illegally. “The problem, however, is that most, if not all, of the actual cash provided to those individuals in British Columbia is derived from profit-oriented criminal activity and is being paid out by the operator of the informal value transfer system in furtherance of a money laundering scheme,” he wrote.

The longstanding belief that this activity was significant enough to greatly upset the BC housing market fueled escalating anti-Asian hate in the province.

Vancouver police [have said anti-Asian hate crimes rose 717%](#) during the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic, attributing some of that uptick to allegations of foreign interference in the real estate market.

[Nearly half](#) of Vancouver’s population identifies as Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Japanese or another Asian ethnicity.

In the report, Cullen implored legislators to veer away from racist stereotyping, urging them to “take care not to stray into treating any ethnic community as presumptively dishonest or unlawful”.

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HEADLINE	06/16 Mass shootings: gangs, not lone wolf attack
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jun/16/street-brawls-gang-gunfights-dominate-causes-267-m/
GIST	<p>The country’s eyes are trained on high-profile massacres in Texas and Buffalo, but most mass shootings bear little resemblance to those.</p> <p>Of 267 incidents this year classified as mass shootings by the Gun Violence Archive, nearly all can be tied to gang beefs, neighborhood arguments, robberies or domestic incidents that spiraled out of control.</p> <p>Indiscriminate slaughter by a lone gunman blasting away at a store, school or some other public place is rare, according to a Washington Times analysis of the archive’s data, accounting for less than 4% of the total.</p> <p>The lower-profile shootings involve significant carnage, and all have one common thread: a firearm was used.</p> <p>Beyond that, the shootings look very different.</p> <p>Many, particularly those on the streets or that stem from gang issues, involve multiple shooters spraying bullets. Domestic incidents can turn into mass incidents based on chance, such as who happened to be home when the shooter came calling.</p> <p>That’s a far cry from the deranged lone wolf maniacs who blasted away at elementary school children in Uvalde, Texas, and targeted a grocery store in a predominantly Black neighborhood in Buffalo, New York.</p>

The myriad causes complicate the search for solutions.

“The majority of people in America get their information from the news, but the news only really pays attention to these extreme outlier attacks,” said Joel Capellan, a criminology professor at Rowan University who has studied mass shootings. “They are deadly and horrible, but they are not very common. But it is what we see in the news, and that creates the perception that this is the biggest problem.

“The left and the right have been consistently getting this wrong for decades because the narrative goes beyond guns and mental health,” Mr. Capellan said. “There is no one solution to mass shootings because it is a multidimensional problem. You need to focus on each specific type of mass shooting to get the desired effect.”

Lone wolf gunmen

The Gun Violence Archive, a nonprofit research organization that catalogs instances of firearms violence in the U.S., defines mass shootings as those in which four or more people are shot, not including the shooter or shooters.

The Times pored over the 267 mass shootings recorded this year from Jan. 1 to June 15 and matched them against police and media reports to determine motives and circumstances.

Roughly 60% were heat-of-the-moment altercations, gang-related shootings or both. Another 10% were domestic incidents in which relatives were victimized, and 27% were a mix of attacks on specific victims, robberies gone awry, or cases in which a motive couldn’t be gleaned.

That left only a little more than 3% of the shootings that could be classified as indiscriminate rampages by deranged lone wolves.

The 267 mass shootings in the U.S. so far this year lag slightly behind the 278 incidents through June 15, 2021. Last year was the worst on record since the Gun Violence Archive began tracking mass shootings in 2014. The archive recorded a total of 692 mass shootings in 2021.

In 2020, the U.S. had 610 mass shootings, up from 417 in 2019, according to the archive.

So far this year, 303 people have been killed and 1,150 have been injured in mass shootings, according to the archive’s data.

Out of this year’s total, arguments or gang violence accounted for 174 deaths (57%) and 869 injuries (75.5%). Lone wolf attacks resulted in 45 deaths (15%) and 52 injuries (4.5%), according to The Times’ analysis.

The recent mass shootings in [Buffalo](#) and Texas reignited the long-simmering debate over access to firearms in the U.S.

Gun control advocacy groups note that the U.S. is the only country in the world that has more guns than people, with 120.5 firearms per person, according to data from Small Arms Survey, a gun research organization.

“This needs to be the moment when our nation draws the line, and when our lawmakers start doing their job and pass common-sense laws to keep us safe,” John Feinblatt, president of Everytown for Gun Safety, said in a statement after the [Uvalde](#) shooting.

Second Amendment activists say the spate of mass shootings is an outgrowth of the nation’s overall surge in violent crime. Homicides in major U.S. cities increased 5% last year compared with 2020 and 44% compared with 2019, according to data from the Council on Criminal Justice.

Mark Oliva, public relations director for the National Shooting Sports Foundation, a trade association for the firearms industry, said politicians lack the will to enforce gun laws to keep criminals off the streets.

“District attorneys have the laws to go after gang members and put them in jail, but what we are seeing in Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Seattle and San Francisco are district attorneys who are soft on crime and turning out criminals back on the streets to commit more crimes,” he told The Times.

The organizations have also called for expanding mental health resources to prevent mass shootings. On Capitol Hill, lawmakers are trying to find solutions that can appease both sides.

In Democrat-led states, the answer to mass shootings of all stripes comes back to guns.

The Rhode Island legislature this week passed a ban on high-capacity magazines, which hold more than 10 rounds. State Sen. Cynthia Coyne, a Democrat, said the measure will crack down on lone wolf attacks and gang activity.

“High-capacity magazines have no legitimate purpose for hunting or self-defense,” Ms. Coyne said. “They enable shooters to unleash torrents of bullets and inflict maximum harm in mere seconds, making them a tool of the trade for mass shootings, drug trafficking and gang violence.”

New York last week enacted a slew of state laws restricting access to weapons used in mass killings. People younger than 21 can no longer buy semi-automatic rifles such as an AR-15, which was used in [Buffalo](#) and [Uvalde](#) and is the most popular style of rifle sold in the U.S.

Among the legislation was a measure aimed at preventing gun crimes associated with gang violence by making it easier for law enforcement to match firearms with an expended cartridge through microstamping technology.

Street arguments spill over

Before [Uvalde](#), the largest mass shooting this year was at a car show in Dumas, Arkansas, where a gang-related argument began with punches and ended with bullets. One bystander was killed and 27 people, including six children, were injured.

In April, a shootout among rival gang members left six dead and 12 wounded outside bars and clubs in downtown Sacramento, California. Authorities say more than 100 shots were fired.

Just days after the [Uvalde](#) school shooting, three bystanders were killed and 11 others were injured in a mass shooting along Philadelphia’s popular South Street entertainment district. Police said the shooting was sparked by a fight among three men who fired at one another. Despite not knowing the three men, two others opened fire in response to the chaos.

Arguments and retaliation motivated roughly 58% of the past 100 shootings in Philadelphia, according to data from the Philadelphia Police Department.

Gun rights advocates say they see a common thread.

“The other side doesn’t want to acknowledge that these crimes are happening in Democratic-controlled cities, where you have demonization of police, defunding the police, and judges that let people out with no bail, even for a gun crime,” said Alan Gottlieb, founder of the Second Amendment Foundation. “They don’t want to talk about any of that. They only want to demonize guns and gun owners.”

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HEADLINE	06/16 Alabama church shooting: 2 dead, 1 injured
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/16/us/vestavia-hills-alabama-church-shooting.html
GIST	An assailant opened fire at a church in Alabama on Thursday evening, killing two people and wounding one other, the authorities said.

A suspect was in custody after the shooting, at Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church in Vestavia Hills, a city of around 34,000 people about six miles south of Birmingham, said Capt. Shane Ware of the Vestavia Hills Police Department.

The injured victim was being treated at a hospital, and the condition was not immediately known, Captain Ware said.

"A lone suspect entered a small group church meeting and began shooting," Captain Ware said.

At the time of the shooting, a "Boomers Potluck Dinner" was being held in the church, according to a calendar on the church's website. It was supposed to be a relaxing evening without an agenda, according to organizers. "There will be no program, simply eat and have time for fellowship," an advertisement for the event said.

Gov. Kay Ivey of Alabama called the shooting "a tragic loss of life."

"This should never happen — in a church, in a store, in the city or anywhere," she said.

The Rev. John Burruss, who serves as the church's rector, said in a video posted online that he was in Greece on Thursday on a pilgrimage but was working to quickly get home.

"I'm deeply moved by the radical support of love from many people reaching out from all over the country," he said.

He added that in the coming days, the church would share ways to "pray and to gather."

"That is what we do as people of faith," he said. "We come together in midst of life and death."

The shooting comes amid a nationwide explosion in gun violence, including two gun massacres in May: one at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas, that left 19 children and two teachers dead; and a racist attack at a Buffalo supermarket in which a white gunman killed 10 Black people.

The back-to-back mass shootings pushed the issue of gun violence to the forefront in Washington, where Congress is trying to advance a bipartisan deal on a narrow set of gun safety measures, including enhanced background checks to give the authorities time to check the juvenile and mental health records of any prospective gun buyer under the age of 21.

Also in May, a 68-year-old Las Vegas man opened fire inside a church with a Taiwanese congregation in Southern California, killing one person and wounding five others in what the Orange County sheriff described as a "politically motivated hate incident."

The Rev. Kelley Hudlow of the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama said by phone on Thursday that she had driven to the church right when she heard about the shooting. When she arrived, Ms. Hudlow said she saw churchgoers and other members of the community praying together while some witnesses spoke to the authorities.

"Everybody is in a fair amount of shock," she said. "It's not what you think is going to happen here."

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HEADLINE	06/16 SPD longer to respond to high priority calls
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/police-response-times-are-dramatically-up-for-people-in-need-the-most-in-seattle
GIST	SEATTLE - Police response times for people in need in Seattle are dramatically up as the Seattle Police Department struggles with a staffing crisis, according to a new report .

Since January of 2020, more than 400 officers have left the Seattle Police Department, which is more than 30% of sworn officers on the force.

Response times have been a concern for well over a year.

But the new data shows that the situation is getting worse, with the highest-priority calls in some parts of Seattle taking on average over 11 minutes.

The average and median responses are up in nearly every part of the city when compared to the last four years, according to the report.

The [North and Southwest precincts](#) are struggling the most with response times for Priority 1 calls, which means there is an immediate threat to life. Response times on average are just over 11 minutes for those two precincts, which has increased from last year. The Southwest precinct includes West Seattle.

In 2019, response times were over 10 minutes for the North precinct and around eight minutes for the SW precinct for Priority 1 calls.

The West precinct has the quickest average response times at under nine and a half minutes for the highest priority calls,

That is also up from 2019, when it took officers just under seven minutes to respond to calls for help, according to the report. The West precinct includes areas like Queen Anne, Magnolia and downtown Seattle.

When it comes to Priority 3 calls for the West precinct, it takes nearly two hours for officers to respond compared to 2019 when it was on average just over an hour.

These calls are cases that present no significant threat of serious physical harm.

The report also dives into overtime numbers for SPD, and it shows that 55% to 88% of overtime is for patrol, including big events like those at Climate Pledge Arena.

Over the years, Seattle police officers, along with the union representing them, have said that many officers are leaving over the political climate in Seattle. They say officers are not supported by Seattle City Council members, after most called to defund the police in 2020, following protests over the deadly police shooting of George Floyd.

The new data on response times was presented to council members on Tuesday. Outside of Alex Pedersen, Sara Nelson and Debora Juarez, the rest have called to defund police in 2020.

Only one council member on the five-person [Public Safety and Human Services Committee](#) commented on the new response times. Council member Alex Pedersen calling them "disturbing" and made a request for officers to stay.

On Tuesday, FOX 13 reached out to the council members who supported defunding police for comment about the latest response times. We only heard back from Council member Lisa Herbold.

"With 300 plus fewer officers in service, we need SPD patrol officers deployment to Priority 1 911 calls to take precedent over directing traffic at events," said Herbold. "In the first quarter of 2022, SPD has deployed officers to 23,000 hours of overtime for events staffing, much of it exclusively for traffic enforcement. Parking Enforcement Officers should be doing much of this work. Let's prioritize deploying officers to overtime work to respond to high-priority public safety incidents, not directing traffic."

	<p>During the campaign trail, Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell said long response times were a concern for him and something he planned to address as mayor, if he won.</p> <p>A spokesperson for Harrell released a statement in response to the new data:</p> <p>"Every community in Seattle deserves to feel safe and be safe. Facing increasing crime and gun violence, Mayor Harrell is fully committed to addressing SPD's historic staffing crisis and hiring more officers to improve response times and ensure investigations are swift, thorough, and complete."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 KCSO: rise in human trafficking reports
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/renton-police-new-massage-employee-held-against-her-will-sexually-exploited-at-spa
GIST	<p>RENTON, Wash. - A 39-year-old woman has been arrested after Renton police say she held a woman against her will and sexually exploited her at a massage parlor.</p> <p>According to the victim, she accepted what she thought was a legitimate offer of employment from Q Spa at 4508 NE 4th Street. When she showed up, she said they wouldn't let her leave and told her she was expected to perform sexual services for clients.</p> <p>The victim was able to leave and immediately called 911.</p> <p>The Renton Police Department's Special Enforcement Team, Direct Enforcement Team and Valley SWAT team served a search warrant at the spa on Wednesday and arrested one woman. She was charged with first-degree attempted promoting prostitution and unlawful imprisonment.</p> <p>Neighbors told FOX 13 that they weren't entirely surprised with the news of the arrest.</p> <p>"There's a blue pick-up sitting up there and the passenger female was providing some sexual services to the gentleman and we've actually seen that vehicle here quite often unfortunately and a few others," said neighbor Brandy Simis. "After they had finished, I actually walked outside right past the vehicle, past the passenger window, and watched her being paid."</p> <p>While an arrest has been made for the recent incident at Q Spa, sheriff's deputies say the case is far from closed.</p> <p>Since the start of the pandemic, the King County Sheriff's Office says there has been an increase in human trafficking reports and cases, which includes sex trafficking, labor trafficking and domestic trafficking involving children.</p> <p>"Traffickers are doing things that are taking people across straight lines or dealing with different states or even internationally. And when you look at Seattle—we're a port city and we're also very close to the border of Canada, which also compounds or brings additional challenges into that human trafficking aspect," said Sgt. Corbett Ford with the KCSO.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 School intruder now faces felony charges
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/man-accused-of-intruding-into-seattle-school-campus-now-facing-felony-charges
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — A repeat offender accused of trespassing inside a local elementary school earlier this month while kids were inside is now facing felony charges, and the King County Prosecutors' Office is recommending that he be held on a \$250,000 bond.</p>

Liban Harsam, 20, is accused of hopping a fence at Sand Point Elementary School on June 2, overpowering one student who tried to keep him out, then assaulting another student who tried to intervene.

A spokesman for the prosecutors' office said Thursday that the department acted quickly to file felony charges, about a day after getting new information from the Seattle Police Department.

"We charged that burglary and assault of a child counts, two separate charges," said Casey McNerthney, spokesman for the King County Prosecutors' Office.

Custodian Kale Tinsley painted a picture of what he says happened back in early June before a teacher intervened.

"He grabbed two children," Tinsley said. "He grabbed one, and thought that's the one girl he wanted to take, but then another girl tried to defend her friend and he deflected her, grabbed her too."

KOMO News reported earlier this month that Harsam was initially booked for misdemeanor crimes because of a lack of evidence, and the case was referred to the city attorney's office.

But on Thursday, the prosecutors' office explained how they were able to file felony charges in this case.

"There was additional investigative work that was done by Seattle police over the last several days," McNerthney said. "They referred that to us, we reviewed it, said, 'Yes this is a felony case.'"

More charges could be coming for Harsam, who is also accused of assaulting a delivery driver and a police officer after the school incident, but no charging information has been forwarded to the prosecutor's office, as of now.

"If Seattle police, who are still working on this investigation, send us additional info, we certainly can review it for additional felony charges," McNerthney said.

For now, Harsam remains in jail with the prosecutor's office requesting a \$250,000 bond and electronic home monitoring if he's able to post bail.

"We wanted him held in jail because of the brazen terror and the violence that the defendant inflicted on some of the most vulnerable people in our community," McNerthney said.

School officials were allegedly not cooperating with officers early on in this investigation. KOMO News asked police if that has changed, and if that played a role in them getting new info to forward to the prosecutor's office.

Officials would not say, and directed us back to the prosecutor's office.

Seattle Public Schools declined to talk about this case late Thursday.

Harsam's next court date in this felony case is his arraignment scheduled for June 29 at 8:30 a.m.

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HEADLINE	06/16 SCSO: DNA identifies 2 cold case victims
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/dna-helps-solve-2-cold-cases-snohomish-county/281-89bc6564-fdda-4807-86eb-71807ac2e1da
GIST	SNOHOMISH COUNTY, Wash. — The Snohomish County Sheriff's Office (SCSO) announced Thursday that DNA has helped identify a John Doe and a Jane Doe at the center of two separate cold cases in the county.

Othram, Inc., a Houston, Texas-based lab, helped identify the remains of Blaine Has Tricks, whose body was found in a landfill in 1977, and Alice Lou Williams, who went missing in 1981, SCSO said.

"There's always hope, even after 45 years," said Snohomish County Sheriff's Office Cold Case Detective Jim Scharf. "These cases can be solved."

Blaine Has Tricks

In September 1977, an employee at the Marysville Landfill discovered human remains and contacted SCSO. SCSO determined the man, later identified as Has Tricks, had come to the landfill from business dumpsters in downtown Seattle.

The Snohomish County coroner ruled the death a homicide but an autopsy could not determine the cause due to extensive post-mortem trauma from compaction during transport and bulldozing processes at the landfill.

The Seattle Police Department and the King County Sheriff's Office ruled out several missing persons by dental records and circumstances.

SCSO pointed to record-keeping practices at both the coroner's office and the sheriff's office as contributing to the case going cold.

Authorities have been reexamining the case since 2009 and exhumed Has Tricks' body in 2011.

In 2021, detectives submitted remains to Othram for DNA extraction and testing. The DNA was used to link Has Tricks to relatives in the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe in South Dakota, and Has Tricks was identified.

Has Tricks disappeared in 1977 after hopping a train in Spokane, Washington with his brother. Has Tricks was not seen again or reported missing.

Verle Red Tomahawk, who is Has Tricks' cousin, said they can bring him home thanks to the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office.

"They never gave up," Red Tomahawk said. "They were persistent and doing their work and it paid off. They identified them."

Red Tomahawk is one of Has Tricks' only surviving family members and lives on the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Reservation in North Dakota where Has Tricks grew up.

Red Tomahawk remembered Has Tricks as being nice to everybody and treating people with respect.

"Even though he's passed away, at least he'll be brought back to the homeland," Red Tomahawk said.

Alice Lou Williams

In 2009, U.S. Forest Service surveyors discovered a partial human skull in a steep ravine near Beckler Road north of Skykomish.

Authorities searched the area but were unable to find other remains, clothing or jewelry.

Dr. Kathy Taylor, a forensic anthropologist for King County and Washington state, determined the remains belonged to a woman in her 40s. SCSO said due to the limited remains found, no other physical characteristics could be determined.

Authorities classified the death as suspicious due to the presence of trauma and the location where the remains were found.

In 2021, SCSO sent remains to Othram for DNA extraction and testing.

In 2022, Othram was able to extract enough DNA to make multiple close genealogical matches.

The Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office officially identified the woman as Alice Lou Williams and classified her death as a homicide.

Williams reportedly went missing under suspicious circumstances from her Lake Loma recreational cabin in July 1981, SCSO said.

Solving the mystery

Othram works with the Washington state Attorney General's Office to solve cases around the state. It has identified five victims and solved two murder cases in Washington, according to dnasolve.com.

Funding comes from various sources, including federal funding and crowdsourcing. Each solve costs around \$5,000 to \$6,000.

Audio Chuck, a true-crime podcast company, funded Williams' and Has Tricks' identification.

Currently, there are 103 cold cases dating back to 1951, and the sheriff's office has found answers to 30 of them.

"I never had any comprehension that we'd be able to solve this many cases since I've been on the cold case team," Scharf, the Snohomish County detective, said.

Scharf said forensic genealogy is the best tool to have emerged in law enforcement. Scharf said SCSO doesn't have any more DNA evidence cold cases they are trying to identify, clarifying they are all identified or already have profiles in place.

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HEADLINE	06/16 Campus sex assault rules face overhaul
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/politics-sports-donald-trump-education-5ae8d4c03863cf98072e810c5de37048
GIST	<p>MISSION, Kan. (AP) — What Karla Arango says started as a dorm-room sexual assault got even worse as word spread around campus. Her attacker's fraternity brothers snubbed her, she says, whispering about her in the cafeteria, blocking her phone number and unfriending her on social media. Soon her grades were slipping.</p> <p>Arango's experience in her first year at Northern Kentucky University highlights what experts see as deep-seated problems with Title IX, the 1972 federal civil rights law that prohibits sexual discrimination in education. It turns 50 this month.</p> <p>Heralded as a gamechanger for female college athletes, the law also is supposed to protect sexual assault and harassment accusers like Arango, giving them options like moving dormitories or even getting their attackers removed from the school.</p> <p>In practice, the law's protections fall short, accusers and advocates say.</p> <p>Polarizing regulations passed under former President Donald Trump have discouraged students from coming forward with abuse allegations. Those who do face a live hearing and cross-examination by a person of their alleged attacker's choosing. The rules also narrowed the definition of sexual harassment and allowed colleges to ignore most cases arising off campus.</p> <p>President Joe Biden and other critics say the rules, finalized in 2020 by then-Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, fail to adequately protect sexual assault victims, deter them from reporting misconduct and go too far in shielding the accused. Biden is expected to announce new rules as soon as this month.</p>

In the meantime, many students have opted out entirely, never reporting the abuse. Or they've chosen to go an informal route, in which the accused might be asked not to take classes with the accuser, or to switch schools — often with no mark on their record.

Arango ultimately decided not to pursue her case, and nothing happened to the other student.

"I felt like my identity was beginning to form, and then it was completely stripped away," said Arango, now 21 and heading into her senior year. "Everyone just saw me as this girl that was lying about being sexually assaulted. And I was spiraling really bad."

The Associated Press typically doesn't identify people who say they have been sexually assaulted, but Arango allowed her name to be used. She serves on a caucus of survivors for End Rape on Campus, a national advocacy group.

Sexual assault is commonplace on college campuses. Thirteen percent of college students overall and nearly 26% of undergraduate women reported nonconsensual sexual contact, according to a 2019 Association of American Universities survey of 181,752 students on 27 campuses. Rates were nearly as high for students who are transgender, nonbinary or otherwise gender nonconforming.

Only about one-third of the female accusers reported what happened, according to the survey. Doing so often ends badly, according to Know Your IX, an advocacy group that has found students who report abuse often leave school, at least temporarily, and are threatened with defamation lawsuits.

"The current process is not really working for anybody," said Emma Grasso Levine, the manager of Know Your IX.

At some universities, the Trump administration rules have been followed by a decrease in the number of complaints addressed by Title IX offices, according to records provided to The Associated Press.

At the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 204 Title IX complaints were logged in 2019, but just 12 in 2021, records show. The number of cases that met the criteria for formal investigations fell from 27 to zero in the same period. No student has been found responsible for a Title IX violation at the university since 2020.

At Michigan State University, the number of Title IX complaints dropped from more than 1,300 in 2019 to 56 in 2021. School officials say the drop is the result of narrowed definitions in the 2020 regulations. Complaints that fall outside the scope of the federal rules now go through a similar but separate disciplinary system, officials said.

Arango's nightmare began in August 2019, when she blacked out after playing a drinking game with her new fraternity friends.

She recalls waking on an air mattress, a male student on top of her, although she had given no consent for the sex. She grabbed her belongings and headed to class, acting like nothing had happened.

She kept quiet until that October, when she told a fraternity friend but swore him to secrecy.

A few days later, she received an email from the Title IX office saying her name had been included in a sexual assault misconduct report. Her friend had shared her secret with the fraternity's president, who was a resident adviser and required to report it.

The accused student soon found out. His fraternity brothers shunned her as she weighed whether to pursue a Title IX investigation. People were calling her a liar, she said.

Arango asked Title IX officials if the other student would be suspended or sanctioned if she filed a formal complaint. The coordinator told her the process was lengthy and that, if nothing else, she probably could get a no-contact order.

She was skipping two classes to avoid the student and his friends, on track to receive the first two Cs of her life — grades that could threaten her scholarship. Then there was the isolation. “The thing is, no one is talking to me anymore,” she realized.

She put the investigative process on hold. By the time she revisited it in the spring, the pandemic was slowing everything down. Then DeVos’ new regulations were announced.

“Byzantine” is the word attorney Russell Kornblith uses to describe them. He is representing three Harvard University graduate students in a lawsuit alleging that the Ivy League school for years ignored complaints about sexual harassment by a renowned professor.

He said pursuing the cases can be time intensive, distracting students from their classwork. Income disparities often play out, with affluent students able to pay for attorneys and others represented only by themselves. In some cases, accusers find themselves being questioned about their sexual past.

A process that already had seemed rough became overwhelming to Arango.

“I just saw the words ‘cross-examination’ and freaked out,” she recalled. “I was like, ‘I can’t. I can’t put myself through that.’”

As more complaints fall outside its scope, experts have raised alarms that colleges are increasingly judging cases in parallel campus discipline systems that don’t guarantee accusers the same rights as Title IX.

Justin Dillon, a Washington-based lawyer who has defended dozens of students accused of sexual misconduct, called the cross-examination process created under DeVos an “unparalleled success,” but criticized the overall handling of sexual misconduct cases under Title IX.

“It’s just sort of created this kind of sexual police state on college campuses that I think goes far beyond making sure that men and women get equal access to education,” he said.

Students are filing fewer sexual misconduct cases and the bulk of them — upward of 90% — are now being handled informally, said Brett Sokolow, president of the Association of Title IX Administrators. Sometimes the accused will simply agree to transfer so their new school won’t know anything happened, he said.

For all the difficulties colleges have had adjudicating sex assault cases, Title IX at least holds them accountable for protecting the rights of accusers who can otherwise sue, said Maha Ibrahim, a staff attorney with Equal Rights Advocates, a nonprofit that represents survivors.

“What if it wasn’t there? Then what?” she said. “You know, college campuses are just a free for all, a very dangerous place for women and for queer folks. And then what?”

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HEADLINE	06/16 RCMP raids neo-Nazi group locations
SOURCE	https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/quebec-raid-atomwaffen-division-neo-nazi-group-1.6491005
GIST	<p>Around 60 RCMP officers are conducting raids southwest of Quebec City, targeting people connected to the neo-Nazi group the Atomwaffen Division.</p> <p>"It's a far-right affiliated group, which could be described as having neo-Nazi allegiance," RCMP Cpl. Charles Poirier said.</p> <p>Poirier said two search warrants are being executed in the towns of Saint-Ferdinand and Plessisville in what he called a "national security operation."</p> <p>Poirier said there was no threat to the general public and no arrests are expected.</p>

He said this is the culmination of an investigation that began in 2020.

Poirier said a command centre has been established beside a church and RCMP officers are searching a house behind the church.

An emergency response team, an armoured vehicle, police dogs and Sûreté du Québec police officers are assisting in the search.

Third raid this year

Atomwaffen Division is a neo-Nazi group founded in the U.S. in 2013. The group claims to be inspired by the serial killer Charles Manson and posits that history will end in a race war.

Stephanie Carvin, a former national security analyst and associate professor at Carleton University, noted that this is the third raid by the RCMP targeting the Atomwaffen Division this year.

Last month, RCMP arrested a 19-year-old man from Windsor, Ont., over alleged links to the group.

And in March, RCMP in Ottawa raided the home of Patrick Gordon Macdonald, a key figure in the group who was known by the name "Dark Foreigner."

"It really does suggest that this movement is alive and well in Canada," Carvin said.

She said the group is more commonly known now as the New Socialist Order and that such groups frequently change their names and reorganize but continue to espouse the same far-right views.

"They want the collapse of society because in the end, the goal of these groups is to create a white ethno-state, and they only see that happening through some kind of civil war," Carvin said.

Carvin said she's not sure why the RCMP would execute such warrants without planning to make any arrests.

"It's hard to know exactly what they're looking for. They may just simply be building a case, trying to understand the network," she said.

"But in order to get a warrant, you have to show that there are reasonable grounds to believe that individuals are engaged in kind of violent extremism activities," Carvin said.

"So it's not just a hunch. It's not just a suspicion," she said.

"You really want to do it in order to prosecute individuals who may actually be involved in violent extremist activity," she said.

"No arrests have been made today and no criminal charges are anticipated today," RCMP Cpl. Tasha Adams told Radio-Canada.

"Search warrants are being conducted to gather more evidence with regards to this investigation," she said.

"It's possible that in the future we'll be conducting further police operations with regards to the evidence that will be collected here today," Adams said.

Bernie Farber, chair of the Canadian Anti-Hate Network, told CBC in an interview he's glad the RCMP is taking the group seriously.

	<p>"I have to say that I've been impressed with the amount of attention that they have paid to not only Atomwaffen but to other groups of its kind — hardcore right, neo-Nazi white supremacist groups," Farber said.</p> <p>"They're taking every precaution and doing things the right way. I think this is what Canadians should be applauding," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 UN: Haiti police need help amid violence
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/haiti-police-amid-surge-violence-85449303
GIST	<p>PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- A U.N. special envoy warned Thursday that Haiti's police force needs immediate help to fight crime and violence, noting that gangs have grown so powerful they recently seized control of a local courthouse.</p> <p>Helen La Lime, the top U.N. official in Haiti, said insecurity is rapidly deteriorating in the country of more than 11 million people, with an average of almost seven kidnappings reported a day.</p> <p>In May alone, she said more than 200 killings and 198 abductions were reported. Those kidnappings included two busloads of children and three U.N. personnel and their dependents, with one local staff member killed in a crossfire between gangs, according to a U.N. Security Council report.</p> <p>"The pervasive and deepening sense of insecurity, exacerbated by the (Haitian National Police's) seeming inability to address the situation and the manifest impunity with which criminal acts are being committed, is dangerously fraying the rule of law," said La Lime, who spoke at a U.N. Security Council meeting on Thursday.</p> <p>The warning comes just days after a gang targeted the Court of First Instance in the capital of Port-au-Prince, looting and burning case files and pieces of evidence, she said. Authorities have identified the gang as "5 Seconds," which supposedly represents the amount of time it takes them to commit a crime. They control the Village de Dieu slum located in front of the courthouse they targeted.</p> <p>Government Commissioner Jacques Lafontant told The Associated Press that he is still waiting for Haiti's National Police to go to the courthouse to assess the damage and ongoing situation.</p> <p>"For now, it's clear that the place is under the control of the gang," he said.</p> <p>Lafontant added that while services at the Court of First Instance were interrupted after the gang burst into the courthouse on Friday, they have temporarily resumed at another government building in the capital.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Aine Martin, who oversees Haiti's association of court clerks, told the AP that the gang destroyed documents and barred lawyers and judges from reaching their offices. He said authorities are still trying to remove a huge safe from the courthouse that contains important documents and evidence including guns and money. He declined to provide details about the case files, including whether any are related to the investigation into the July 7 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse that remains stalled.</p> <p>"These groups are being guided by an invisible hand to destroy sensitive documents," he said, declining to identify who he thinks might be giving orders to gangs.</p> <p>Fondasyon Je Klere, a human rights group based in Haiti, said employees, lawyers, defendants and others were able to save themselves by climbing walls and receiving help from police the day the gang attacked the courthouse.</p> <p>The organization added that one person was injured by a bullet as gangs stole seven cars and equipment including computers, chairs and air conditioners.</p> <p>Three days later, the furniture was seen on display along a nearby street for sale, the rights group said.</p>

It noted that the court takeover occurred days after criminals took over the nearby building of the Center for Planning Techniques and Applied Economics.

Before the gang burst into the courthouse, lawyer unions and others had been protesting what they said was a lack of security as they demanded more protection. Meanwhile, court clerks launched a countrywide strike in mid-April that lasted more than a month.

U.N. officials note that Haitian police have arrested hundreds of suspected gang members and killed more than 120 others, as well as seized several hundred firearms and increased checkpoints and patrols. They added that while various countries including the U.S. have provided training and equipment, the department remains understaffed and under resourced, with only 12,800 active police officers for a country of more than 11 million people.

La Lime, the U.N. official, said gangs are creating a “state of terror” in Haiti and blamed the ongoing instability on what she called a “prolonged institutional vacuum.”

Haiti has not had a functioning Parliament for more than two years, and it has yet to organize general elections after its president was killed at his private home. La Lime also warned that proposals to move the country forward are crumbling, and that the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti known as BINUH is trying to revive dialogue between all parties.

“It is highly unlikely that elections which would usher a return to democratic governance will take place this year,” she said, adding that the creation of a new Provisional Electoral Council is “frustratingly still a distant prospect.”

Thousands continue to flee Haiti as the country’s economy erodes and violence spikes, with gang wars displacing at least 17,000 people.

A growing number of Haitians are embarking on deadly voyages to try and find better lives in nearby Caribbean islands or in the United States. Last month, 11 Haitian women died after a grossly overloaded boat they were on capsized. At least a dozen migrants remain missing and 38 others were rescued — 36 of them Haitian. Also last month, more than 840 Haitians aboard one boat landed in Cuba, the largest such single arrival in recent history.

In addition, U.N. officials said some 40,000 Haitian nationals and those of Haitian descent have been expelled from countries in the Americas region from September 2021 to March 2022, exacerbating humanitarian challenges.

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HEADLINE	06/16 Anti-vax doctor sentenced in Capitol riot
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/dr-simone-gold-leading-anti-vax-figure-sentenced/story?id=85445732
GIST	<p>Dr. Simone Gold, a leading figure in the anti-vaccine moment, was sentenced to prison Thursday for storming the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.</p> <p>The founder of America's Frontline Doctors, Gold and her coalition of physicians have pushed conspiracy theories about the COVID-19 vaccine and promoted disproven treatments like ivermectin. She pleaded guilty in March to a misdemeanor charge of unlawfully entering and remaining in a restricted area of the U.S. Capitol during the Jan. 6 attack.</p> <p>Christopher Cooper, U.S. district judge for the District of Columbia, sentenced Gold on Thursday to a 60-day prison term followed by 12 months of supervised release, and ordered her to pay a \$9,500 fine.</p> <p>In an interview with The Washington Post in January about her involvement in the riot, Gold said that she "regrets being there."</p>

Return to Top	<p>Gold did not respond to ABC News' request for comment.</p> <p>In March, ABC News reported that despite the warnings from health agencies about unproven COVID-19 treatments, several physician groups like America's Frontline Doctors had partnered with telemedicine platforms and pharmacies to offer easy access to drugs like ivermectin.</p> <p>A House probe launched in October is investigating America's Frontline Doctors and other organizations for allegedly "spreading misinformation and facilitating access to disproven and potentially hazardous coronavirus treatments, such as hydroxychloroquine and ivermectin."</p> <p>"Attempts to monetize coronavirus misinformation have eroded public confidence in proven treatments and prevention measures and hindered efforts to control the pandemic," Rep. James E. Clyburn (D-S.C.), chairman of the House Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis, wrote in a letter to Gold when the investigation was launched in the fall.</p>
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